Dec. 25, 1995 & Jan. 1, 1996

THE NEW YORKER

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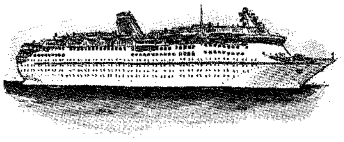
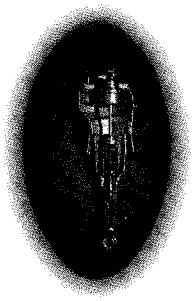
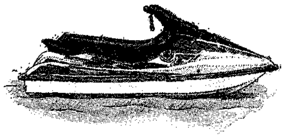
FICTION ISSUE
O Smith

Inertia. Gravity
These Things Mea

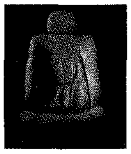


Until recently, fundamental geometry forced suspension engineers to choose between a ride that was soft and stable (see figure A), or one that was quick and nimble (see figure B). Our engineers didn't accept this. So they designed internal rebound springs, as well as an optional electronic air suspension, which employs advanced g sensors. This allows a car to be smooth when you want it to be and responsive when you need it to be. This superb system is available on the LS 400 (see your Lexus dealer).

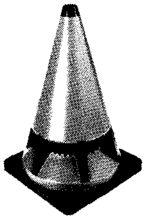


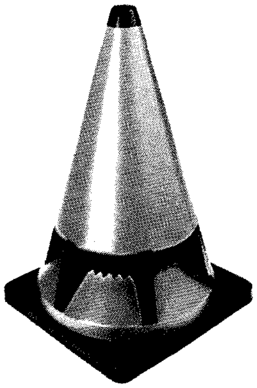


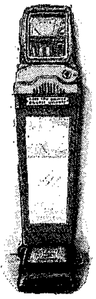
Floating panels in the front seats, supported by coil and tension springs, act as a suspension system to help stabilize movement during cornering. Of course, sitting is believing.



Inertia is the tendency of a body in motion to stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force, such as wind. Consequently, you'd expect a full-sized luxury sedan, with its greater surface area, to be significantly slowed down by the wind. Then how would Sir Isaac Newton explain that the most aerodynamic car sold in America is the LS 400?







Many body components are comprised of high-tensile steel, a strong but light material known for its energy-absorbing properties. While this may seem like a contradiction in terms, it's a great comfort should you find yourself in an accident.

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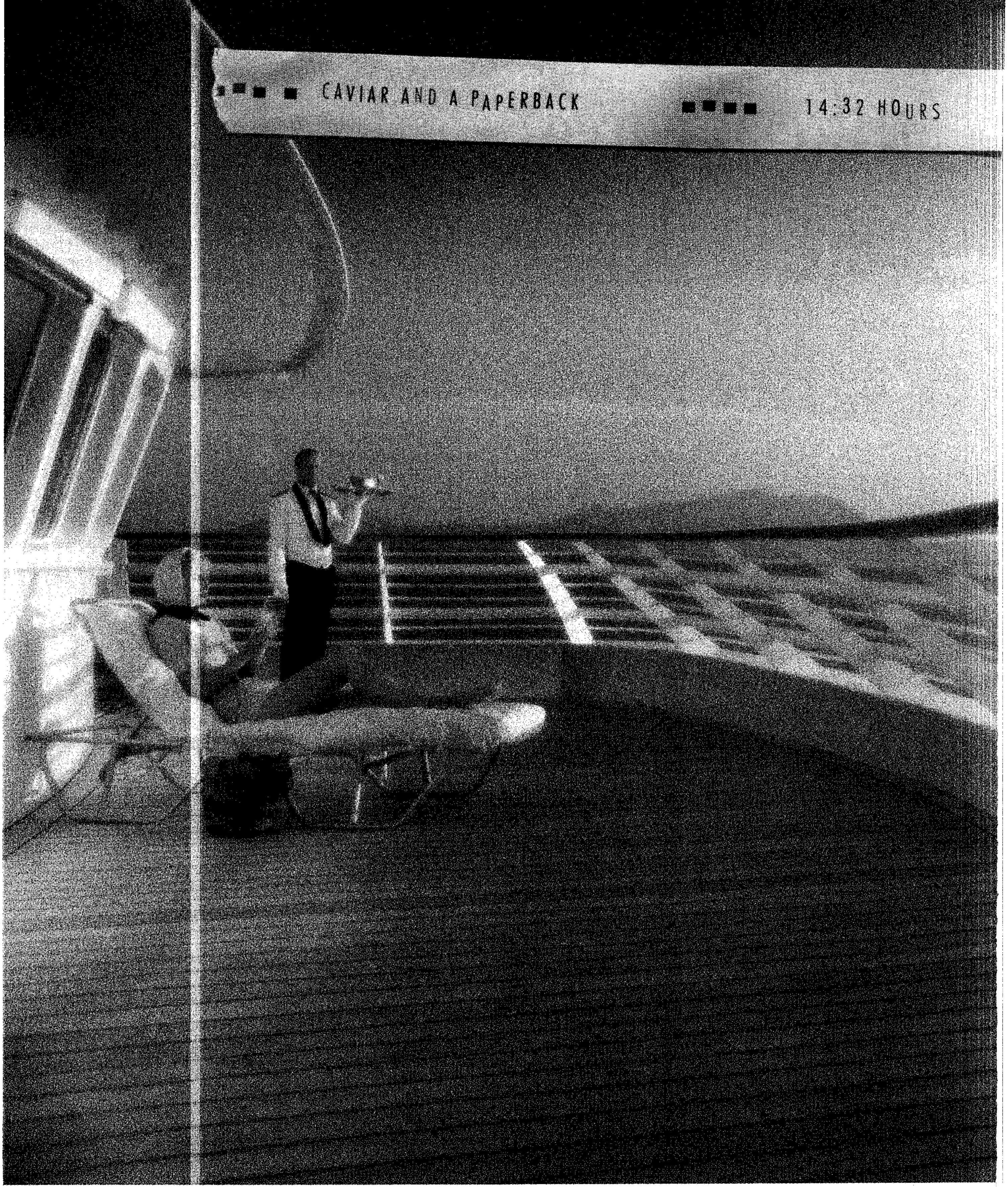
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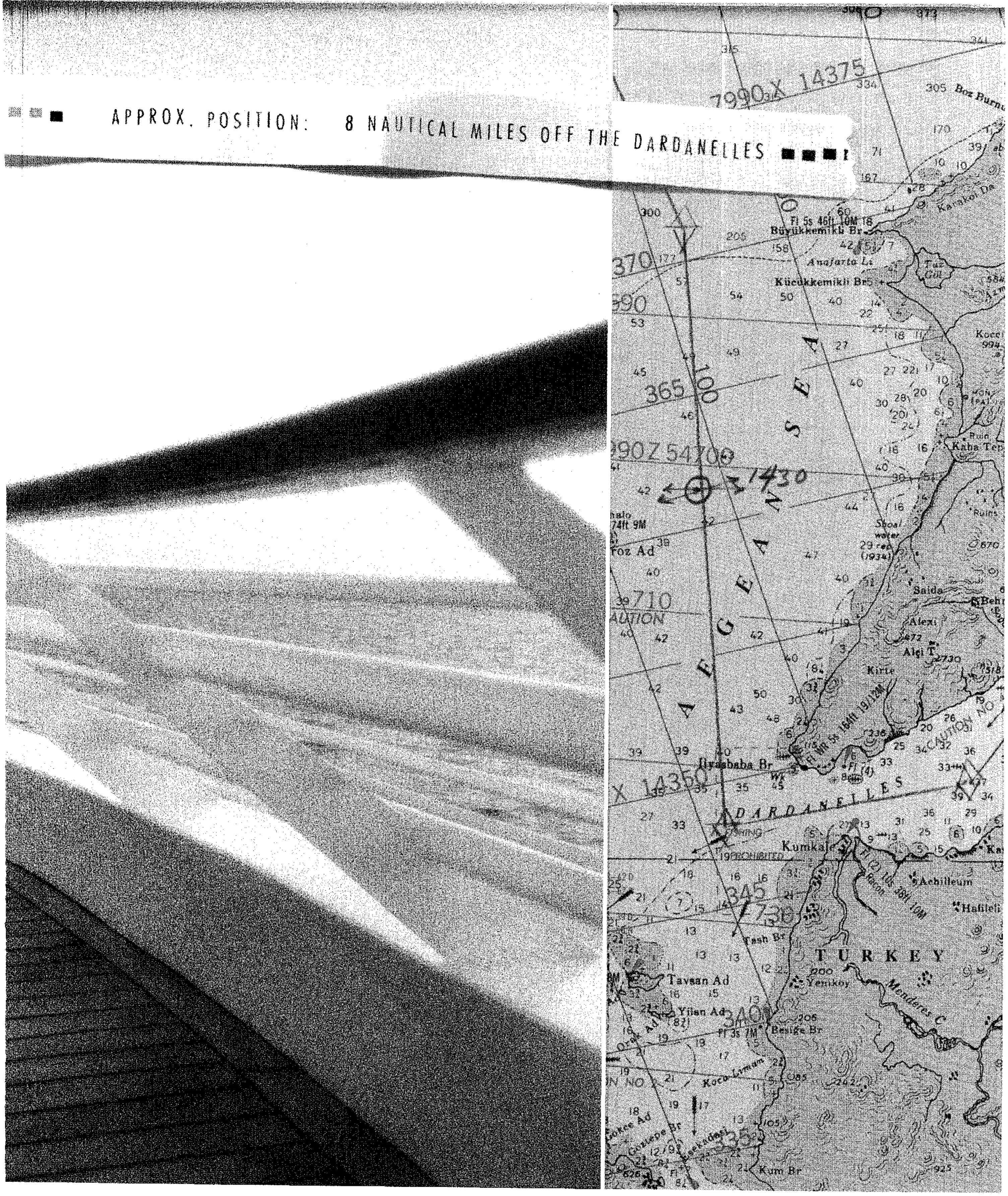
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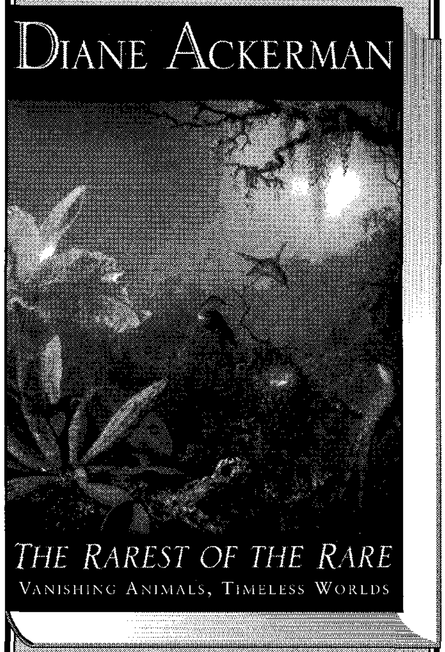

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RANDOM HOUSE

Much of the contents of this book originally appeared in *The New Yorker.*

THE NEW YORKER
SPECIAL FICTION ISSUE

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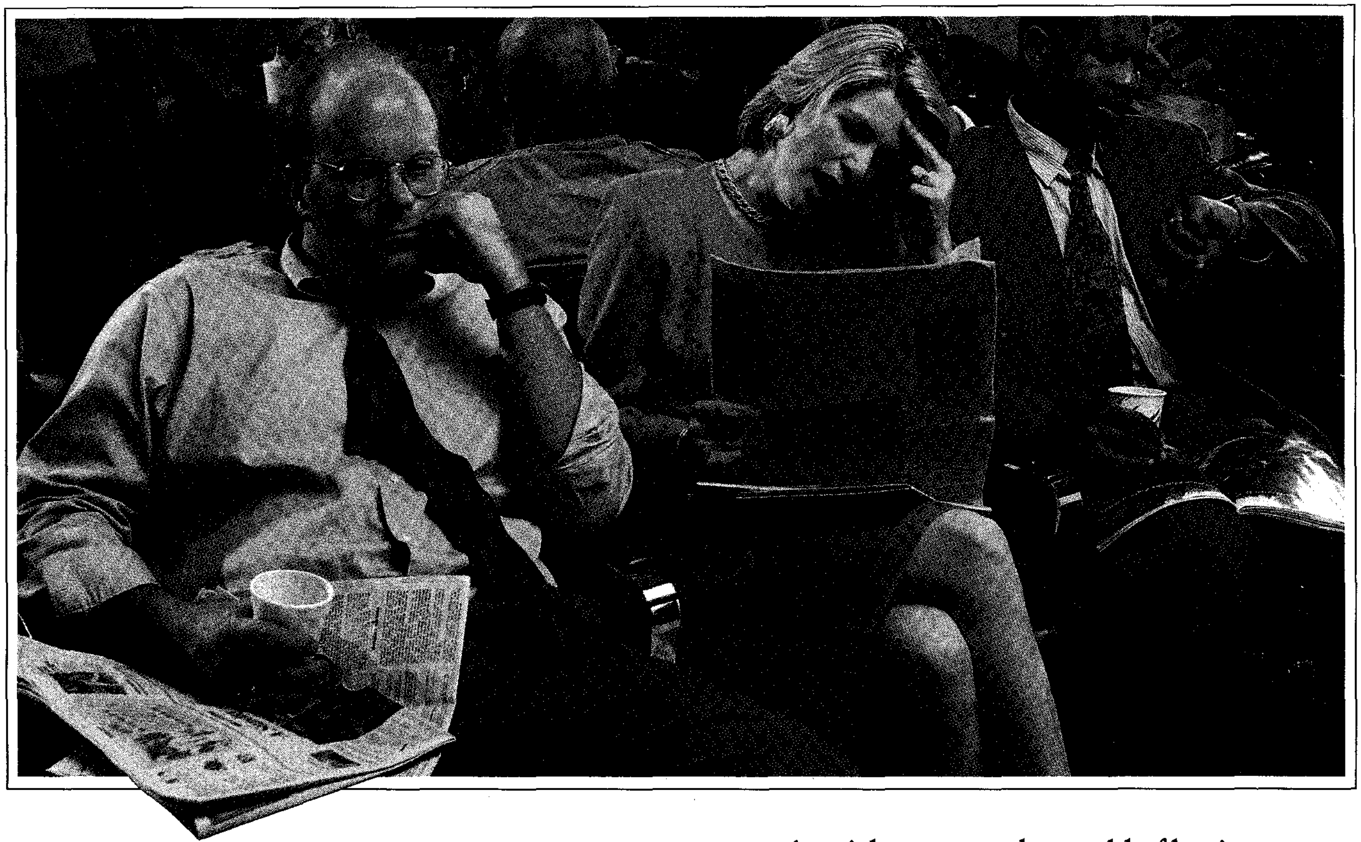

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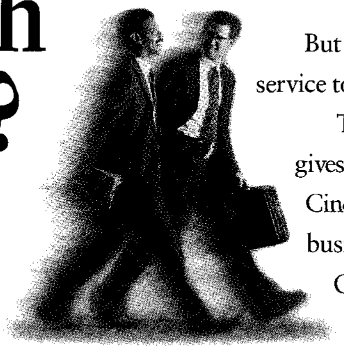

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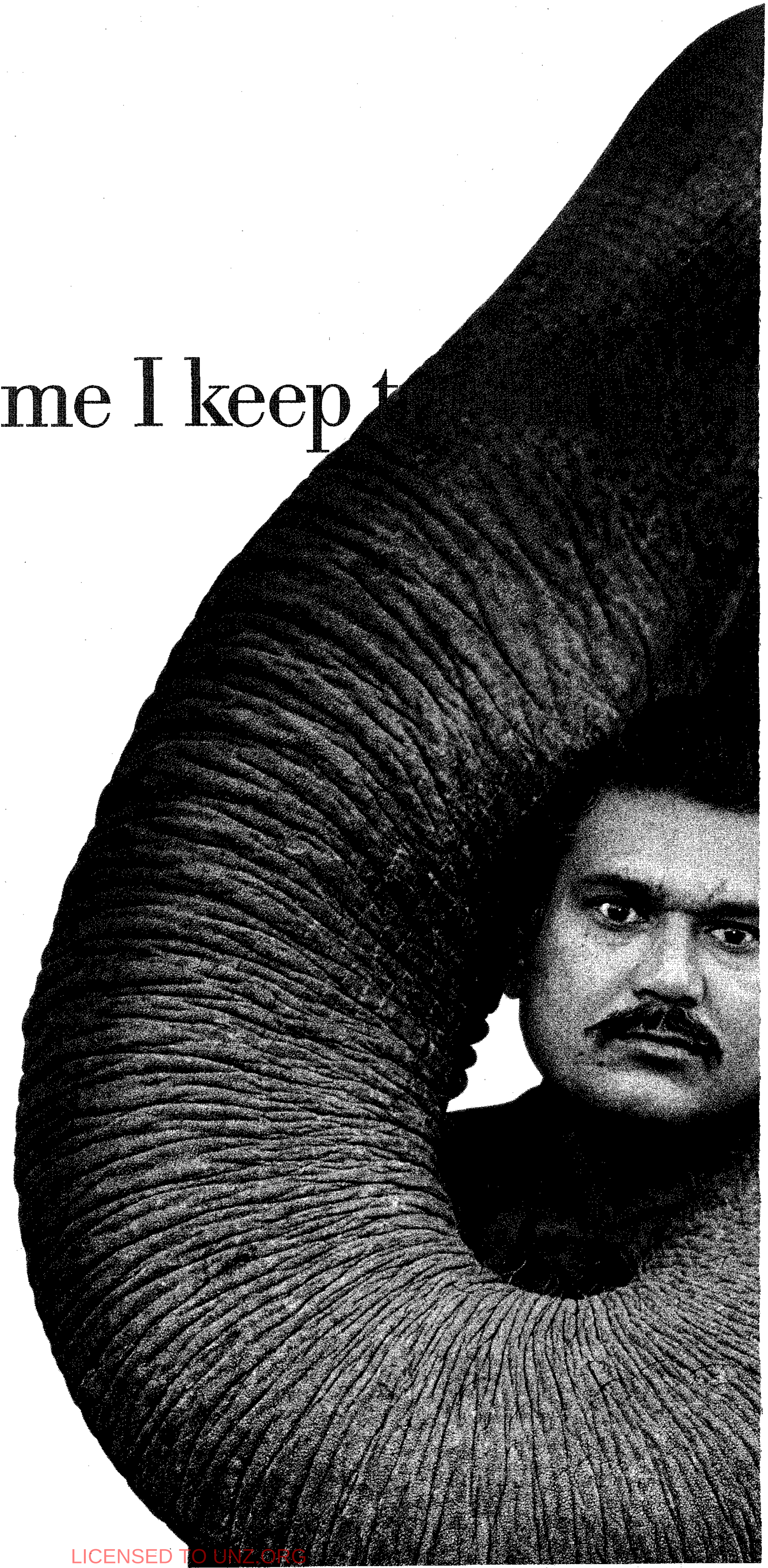

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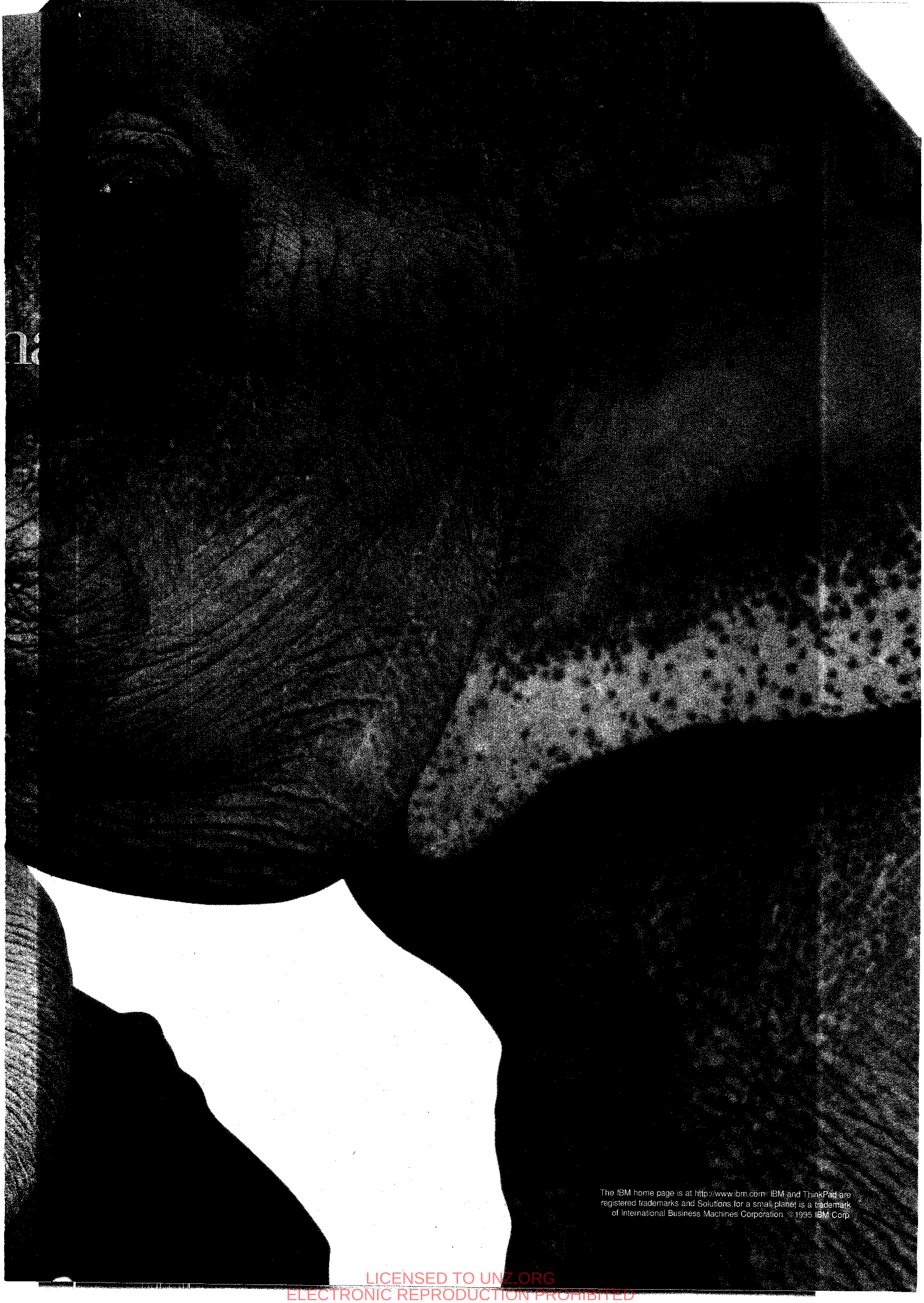

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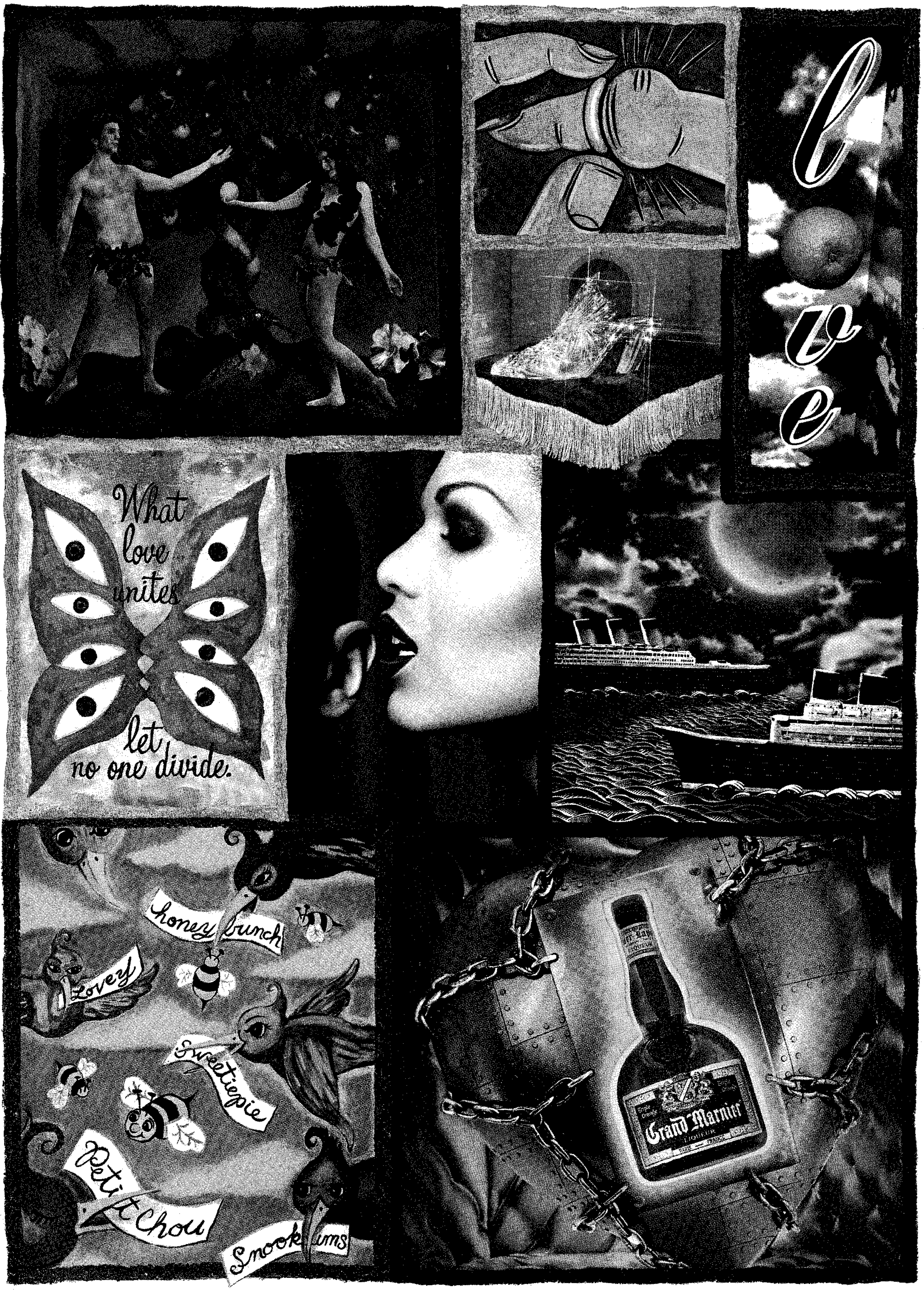
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COMMENT

IT'S ALL OVER

The charms of getting to The End.

TOWARD the end of "Northanger Abbey," Jane Austen makes a characteristically sly joke. The book's readers can tell that a happy ending is coming, she writes, because they "will see in the telltale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity." All novel readers know the feeling: we sneak a glance at the number of pages to come, and wonder how on earth Pip is going to get it together with Estella, how Captain Ahab is going to resolve his differences with Moby-Dick, or how Prince Vir is going to escape from his captivity on the planet Thragnarth, given that the story has only ten pages to go. At the movies, some of us even check in advance the exact time when the picture is due to end, and use that to keep tabs on the plot's progress—a habit that comes in handy during thrillers and horror movies, when a quick peek at our watch tells us whether the denouement on the screen is the real one or another plot twist awaits. (If you try this technique, be warned: it's irritating for anyone you're with; you have to deduct about five minutes from the official ending time to allow for the credits; and it doesn't work for "Carrie.")

The classic study of this subject is Frank Kermode's "The Sense of an Ending," published in 1966. Kermode's book is a study of endings, and ideas about endings, in literature, theology, and history; in this last category he pays especial attention to millennia—epochs when people believe that the world is coming to an end. When endings are expected, they exert a pressure on what comes before them. As the unread portion of a book grows thinner, our desire for a satisfactory resolution becomes more acute, and, similarly, as the last years of a millennium pass by, our imaginings become more lurid, more urgent: hence the Branch Davidians in Texas, the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan, the mania for Third Waves and New Paradigms in Washington.

Certainly a preoccupation with endings has at least a titular hold on our culture. End-of-year bookstore browsers will have noticed, among other titles published in the last two years, Peter Ward's "The End of Evolution" and Theodore J. Lowi's "The End of the Republican Era" and Tom Engelhardt's "The End of Victory Culture" and Ulrich H. J. Körtner's "The End of the World" and Jeremy Rifkin's "The End of Work" and Jeffrey Madrick's "The End of Affluence" and Simon

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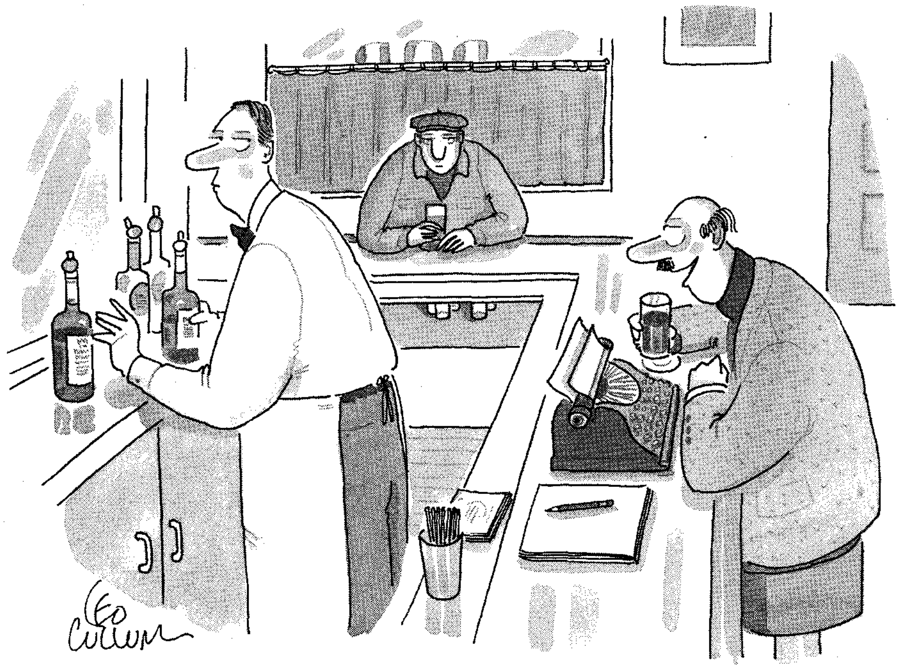


"I make sure I spend six hours a day in front of my typewriter whether I have any ideas or not."

Garfield's "The End of Innocence" and Peter Toon's "The End of Liberal Theology" and Neil Postman's "The End of Education" and Alan Brinkley's "The End of Reform" and Dinesh D'Souza's "The End of Racism" and Jean Gimpel's "The End of the Future" and Jean-Marie Guéhenno's "The End of the Nation-State," not to be confused with Kenichi Ohmae's "The End of the Nation State." It is, in fact, possible to extract from these books a template for writing an "End of . . ." book of your own. Here are the four basic how-to rules:

1. Make it a practice to announce the end of something large and self-evidently thriving. There's no point in writing a book announcing the demise of scrimshaw or the eight-track tape deck: stick to topics that get people worked up. Declare the end of reality (and talk about Disneyland and the O. J. trial) or the end of religion (and talk about televangelists, artificial intelligence, the Rebbe, and the Hubble Space Telescope) or the end of sex (AIDS, androgyny, cloning). You may want to pick up a scrap of paper right now and start jotting down a few ideas. But, before you do so, note Rule 2, which is

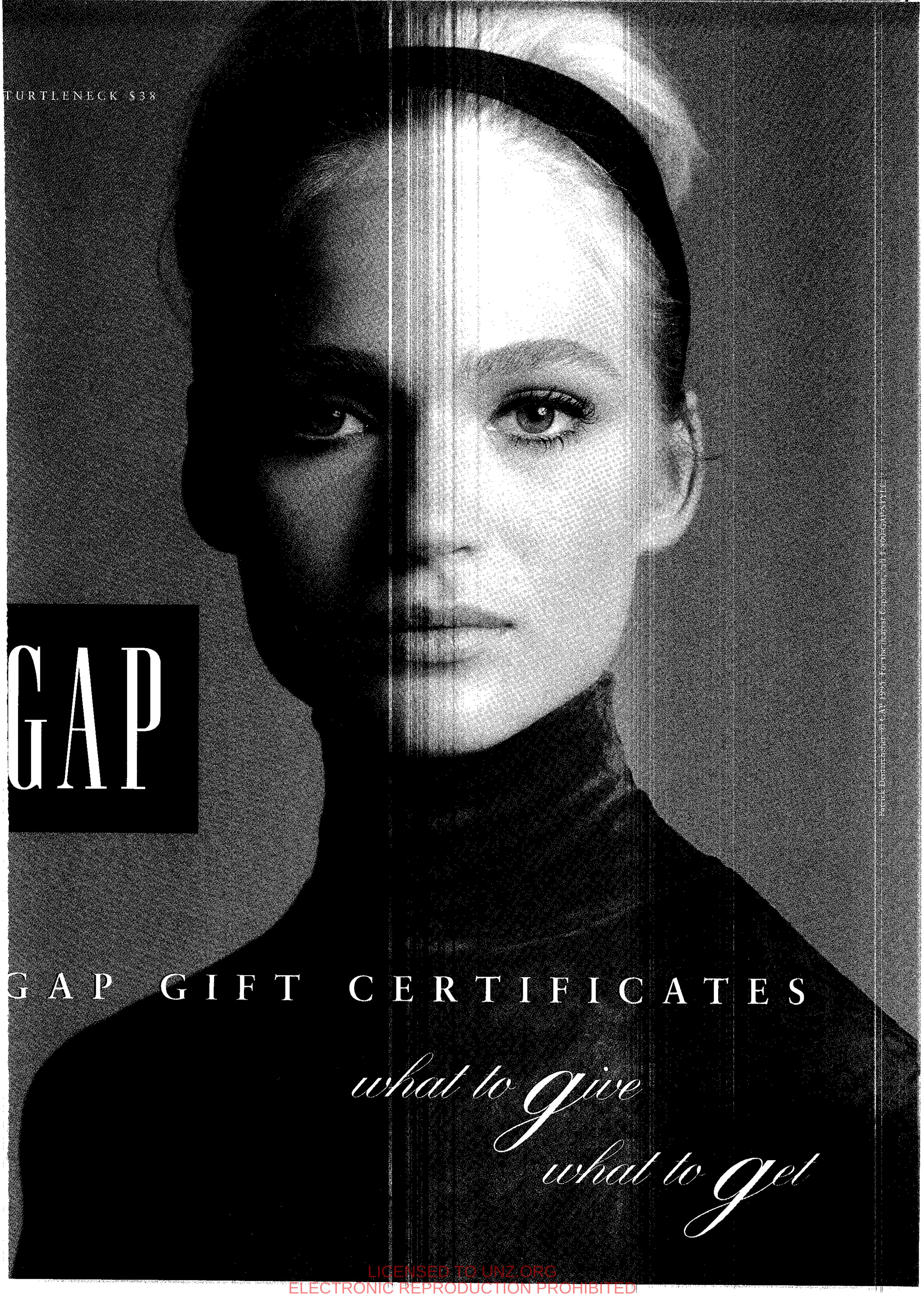
2. Be wrong. A long-established principle of argument, known to every student debater, is that there are invariably more interesting things to be said against the truth than in favor of it. (You don't have to be Mark Fuhrman to relish the unabashed *mal pensanterie* of "The End of Racism.") At the same time, though, it's important to

3. Be a little bit right. "The End of Affluence"? America's gross domestic product is still the grossest in the world, true, and software billionaires are a dime a dozen, but economic growth *has* slowed markedly in the last two decades, leaving average wages lower in real terms than they were in 1973. "The End of the Nation-State"? Yes, modern states have unprecedented amounts of power over their citizens, but developments in economic regionalism *do* tend to lessen the relevance of national boundaries. And, though the world view propounded in "The End of History" (way back in 1992, by Francis Fukuyama) may not be getting much airtime on Radio Sarajevo just at the moment, there *is* a philosophical issue for the West to face in the apparent worldwide triumph of liberal-democratic ideals. And so on. In making your case, however, remember above all to

4. Be factual. Public and private debate depends increasingly on the selection and deployment of facts, which, of course, are not the same thing as truths or ideas. Facts can be picked and chosen, mixed and matched; they are mobile and indifferent and without shame, and if you are proclaiming the end of something you should have lots of them ready to hand. Hawaii once had nine hundred and thirty-one different species of land snail! The average American TV viewer's span of attention is twelve seconds! Every day in America, forty-one million photographs are taken! Hawaii once had nine hundred and thirty-one different species of land snail! But you knew that.

None of this, though, addresses the real question that lurks behind these "End of . . ." books: Why are there so many of them? As Goldfinger told 007, "Mr. Bond, they have a saying in Chicago: 'once is happenstance, twice is coincidence, the third time it's enemy action.' " The current avalanche suggests a powerful tribute to the Zeitgeist, and confirms our general overexcitement about the giddy rush of decades. Luckily, there are antidotes to end-anxiety: most notably, fiction—that is to say, making up stories we know aren't true. Not because endings are less powerful or less necessary in fiction than elsewhere but because they're more so: fiction speaks to our deep psychic need for structure, for things' coming together. Frank Kermode, describing that coming together, uses the term "consonance." It's consonance that supplies the charge we get from any story, whether it's "The Magic Mountain," "This Side of Paradise," or even an episode of "E.R." We need the charge because it taps into our feelings about our own ends; it touches, in a paradoxically reassuring way, on death. In that sense, all writers are Scheherazades, or Salman Rushdies, making up sentences in defiance of a sentence. We need to talk about ends because they are a part of stories, and we need stories because we are human. The best, the safest, the most available and availing form of the feeling that something is coming to an end is to be found exactly where it was in Jane Austen's day: in the telltale compression of pages at the end of a work of fiction.

—JOHN LANCHESTER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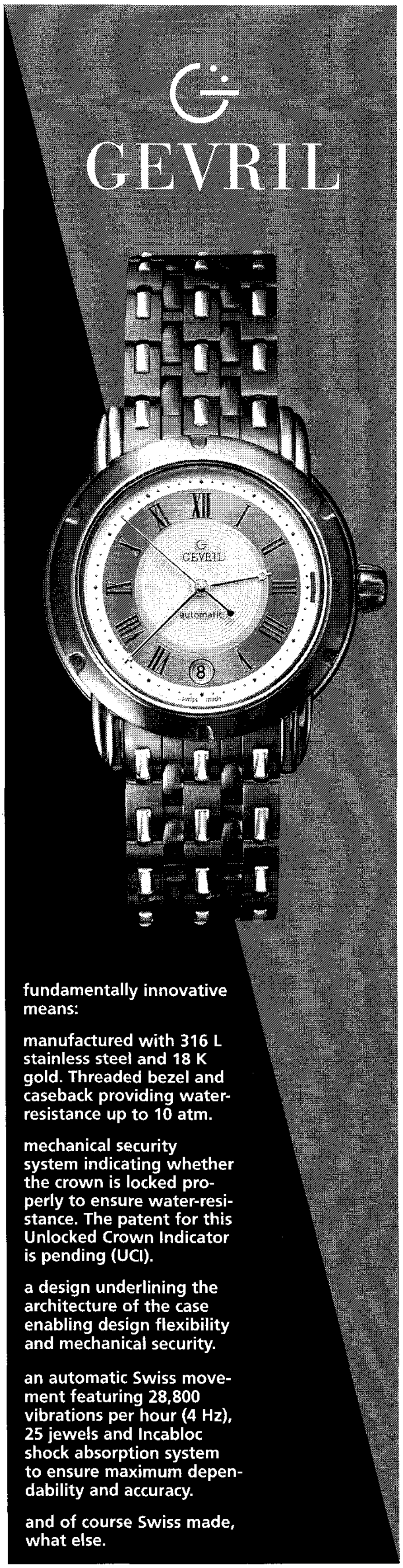
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CRITICS AT LARGE

David Denby's "Jungle Fever" (November 6th), about Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and some revisionist criticisms of it, reminded me of two experiences. As one of the first women in Columbia's great-books colloquium, twenty-five years ago, I asked why the reading list did not include one female author, and was told by a baffled professor, "But then we'd have to drop 'War and Peace.' " Some years later, I wrote a book about Kurdistan and was told by many Kurds that my portrayal of their culture had been both accurate and sensitive; I was stunned when a number of irate Kurds of both sexes later told me how wrong I was to have written that Kurds value male children more than female. Like Denby, I love great literature—even the literature produced by a misogynist like Leo Tolstoy. But such literature no longer sits closest to my heart; I understand, however painfully, the need for women, Kurds, and others to see literature that reflects their own experiences.

MARGARET KAHN
Menlo Park, Calif.

The European expansion during the colonial period inexorably brought into the Western consciousness what had previously been unknown. Whatever Edward Said and Chinua Achebe may think and say, their non-Western analyses are irrelevant to the European experience of the "other," which Conrad evoked in truly exceptional images of pity and terror.

CHARLES S. J. WHITE
Washington, D.C.

For some years now, I have taught "Heart of Darkness" paired with Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" so that students would see the darkness from two perspectives. One of my students wrote, "We were able to see how the 'savages' looked to outsiders in ["Heart of Darkness"]; in 'Things Fall Apart' we lived with a community and grew to understand their . . . humanity, warts and all." Thus art develops and heals some of the hurt inflicted on people by an earlier age's insensitivity.

BILL CLAWSON
Santa Monica, Calif.

Joan Acocella, in "Cather and the Academy" (November 27th), shows how Willa Cather's image has evolved from a reactionary in the thirties to a lesbian today. She imagines that every professor of literature is rushing to parade the latest critical chic. Guess again. The critical disagreements Acocella charts constitute the debate within the academy; the very kind of sophisticated, tempered interpretation Acocella and I both admire emerges only in response to the full range of critical grandstanding. Acocella's "exposé" reminds me of creationists' dismissal of science: since many accepted scientific theories are subsequently disproved, science is inconsistent and intellectually bankrupt, so let's not do science. In Acocella's version, the conclusion is let's just read. I prefer—and encourage my students—to read and think.

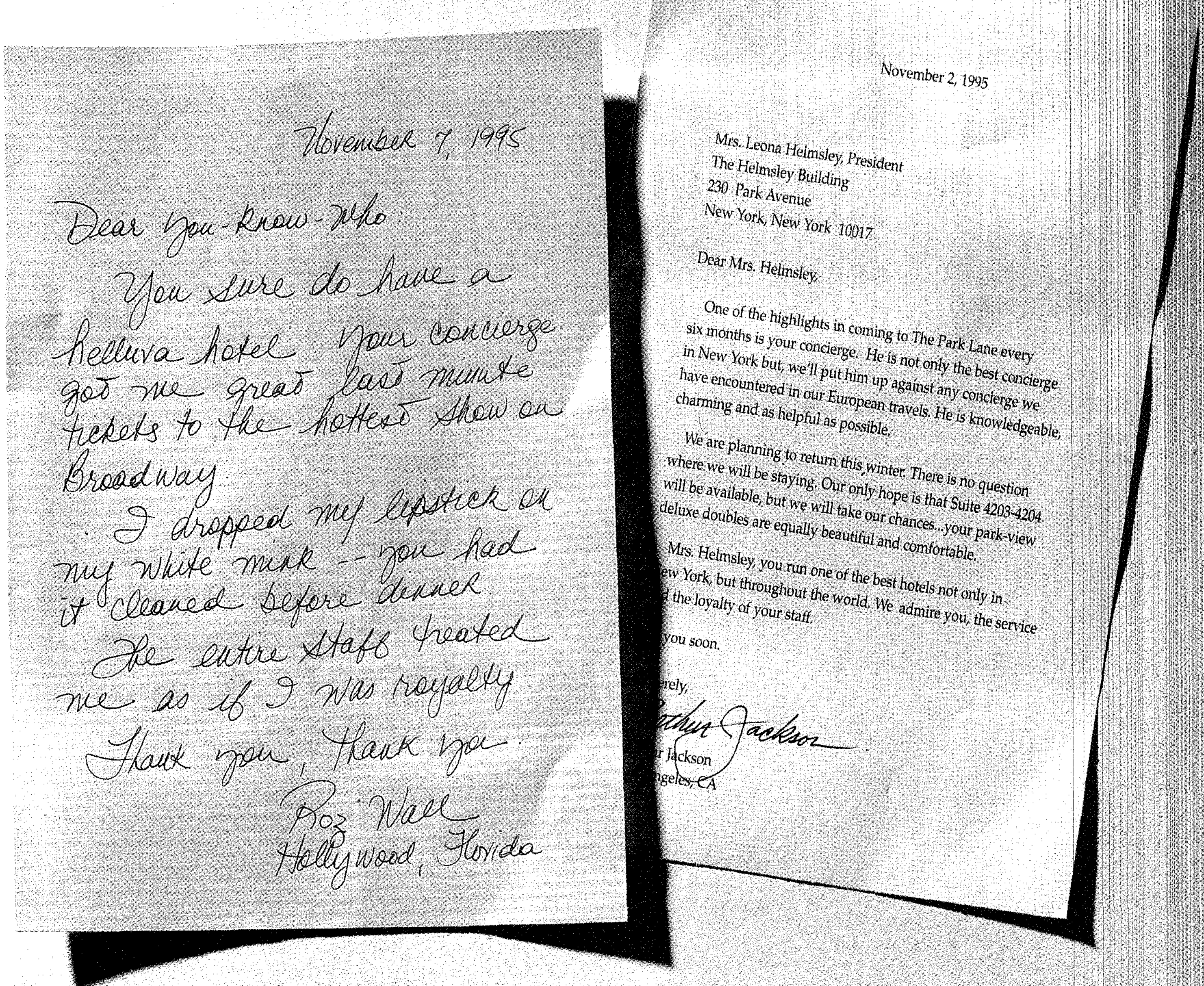
RALPH HEXTER
Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, Calif.

Only a few words are needed to respond to the literary critics determined to deconstruct the work of Willa Cather and many other authors: "You can spot a bad critic when he starts by discussing the poet and not the poem."—Ezra Pound.

NAOMI RACHEL
Boulder, Colo.

David Remnick's account of the scholarly dispute of authorship between Steve Sohmer and Mary Ann McGrail over

SHE KNOWS PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HER. SHE'LL EVEN SHOW YOU WHAT THEY SAY.



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Roz Wall
Hollywood, Florida

November 2, 1995

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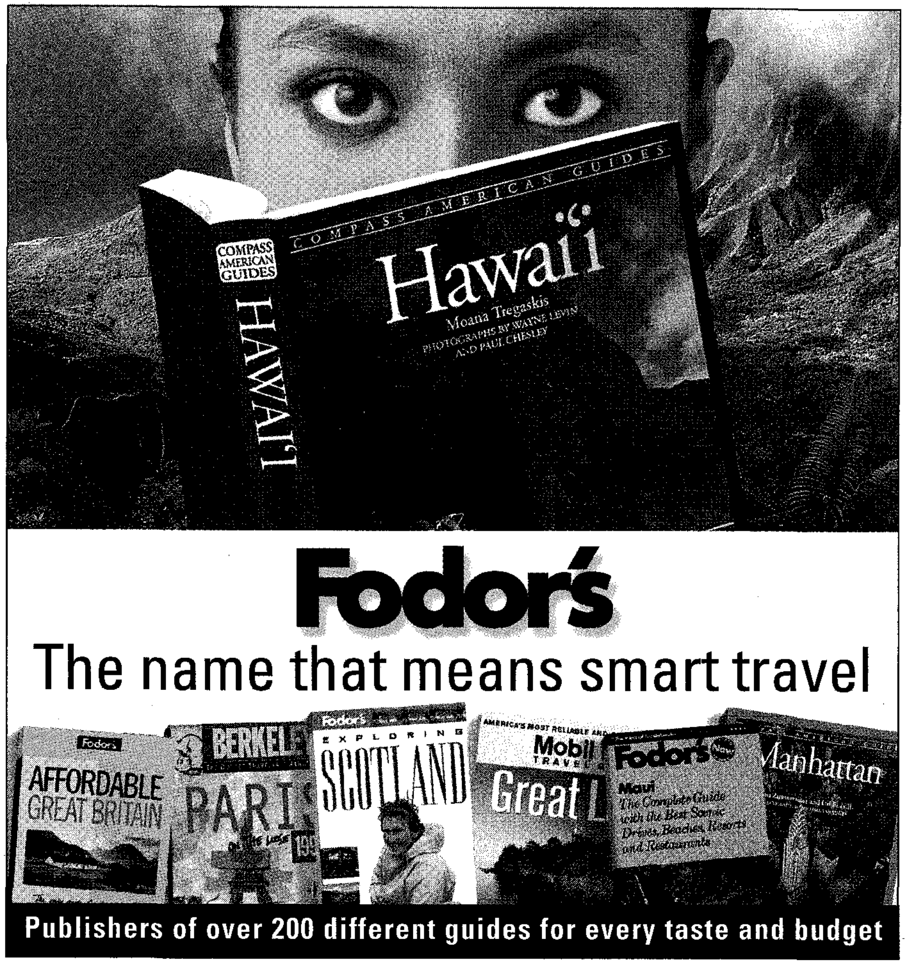

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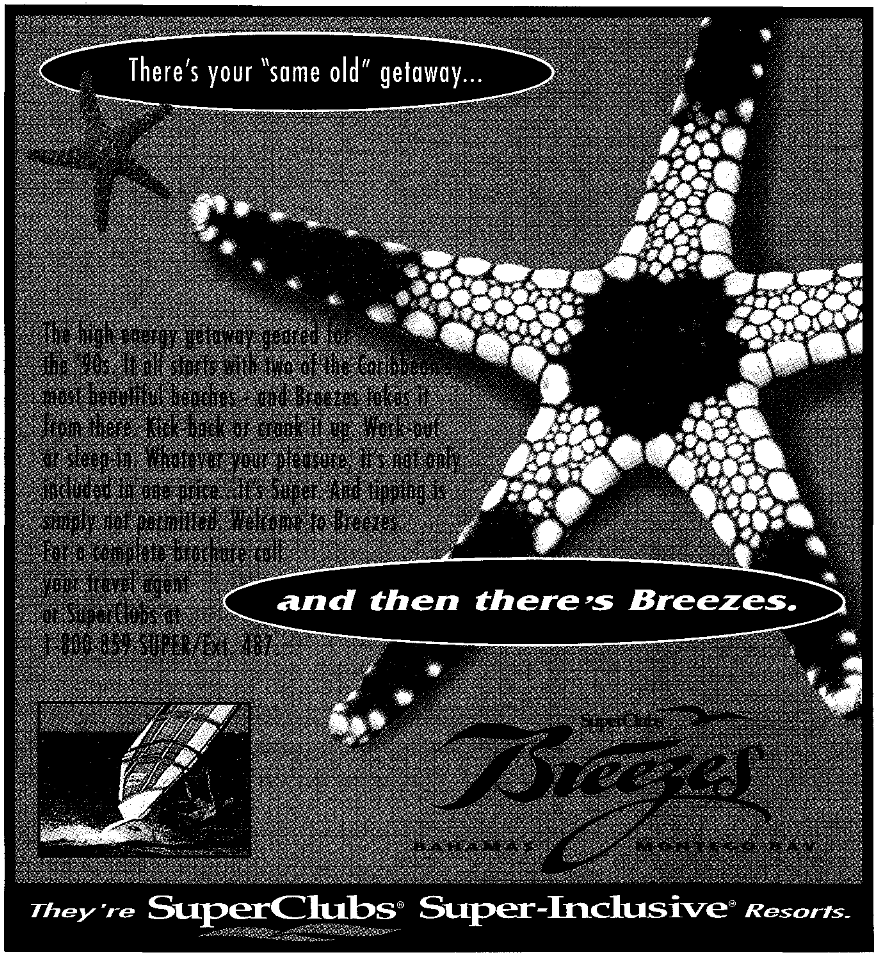

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their theory that Shakespeare's source for "Hamlet" was the life of Martin Luther ("Hamlet in Hollywood," November 20th) states that this theory could change our understanding of Shakespeare. Six years ago, I published an article, "Lutheran Hamlet," in *English Language Notes*, arguing a similar theory. Sohmer's and McGrail's claims to ownership of this particular piece of "intellectual property" seem to be moot, since the basic idea has been freely available in scholarly circles for some time.

RAYMOND B. WADDINGTON
Professor of English, University of California, Davis
Woodland, Calif.

My master's thesis, "Hamlet's Salvation and Luther's Justification by Faith," written in 1973 at Carleton University, examines the "Hamlet"/Luther connection. Had Sohmer's and McGrail's research included a browse through readily available thesis abstracts, they would have discovered for themselves that neither of them was the first in the field. I was not much exercised by the problems Shakespeare might have faced in connecting "Hamlet" with Luther. His overt references to Wittenberg and the pun on the Diet of Worms suggest that he wasn't, either.

DAWN AMOTT
Department of English, Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada

Shakespeare took an old revenge play and transformed it into one of the theatre's greatest dramas. Mark Van Doren, the poet and great Shakespearean, maintained that the plays inevitably contain contemporary allusions, but that these in no way explain a given play or constitute its source. "Hamlet" is not a play about either Martin Luther or the Reformation or the canonical calendar, no matter how many references to these themes are "discovered" in it. For me, the notion is reminiscent of Professor George Kittredge's joke at a banquet in the twenties, when the Baconian theory was rampant: he "proved" by acrostics that Francis Bacon had written the printed menu.

ROBERT GIROUX
New York City

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

The Uncommon Thread 700 Years of Italian Fashion

In Italy, fashion is held in the highest esteem. More than mere vocation, it is a craft passed on through the generations, a passionate birthright claimed and expressed by everyone from the skilled tailor and factory worker to the internationally renowned designers. In the **art of Italian fashion,** quality is inseparable from creativity and equally revered, forming the core of a vast design vocabulary where refinement, sly humor, restraint and unparalleled workmanship come together. Nowhere are these celebrated more ebulliently than in **"Serenissima: The Arts of Fashion in Venice",** an exquisite exhibition which chronicles seven centuries of extraordinary craftsmanship, a period when fashion reached its artistic zenith. "Serenissima" showcases breathtaking examples of fashion finery for both men and women, including delicate laces, sumptuous silks and velvets, intricate embroideries, paintings, drawings and antique tools of the trade. The exhibition explores the hallmarks of the period, such as the **Venetian romance with the masquerade,** the city's fascination with black and scarlet and the influence of the Orient. **The significance of shoes** and other accessories is also highlighted, tracing their evolution from wholly utilitarian items to imaginative, exotic, sensual creations. Richly decorated gloves and ornately embroidered bags, along with masks and veils, complete the picture of a society totally enamored with distinctive dress. Naturally the exhibit is more than a window into the past, it also offers a **glimpse of the future.** It is possible to trace the lineage of numerous styles due to be previewed by modern Italian designers in their spring collections. This is hardly unusual, since, as in all arts, today's masters absorb, adapt and enhance the ideas of the past as they craft tomorrow's masterpieces. So it is with today's creators of fashion as they seek to perpetuate the Italian legacy: to influence **future generations** as they themselves have been inspired by their sartorial forebears. "Serenissima" will be on view at The Equitable Gallery from November 29, 1995 to January 20, 1996. The Gallery is located at 787 7th Avenue at 51st Street, open from 11 am to 6 pm weekdays and noon to 5 pm Saturdays. Admission is free.

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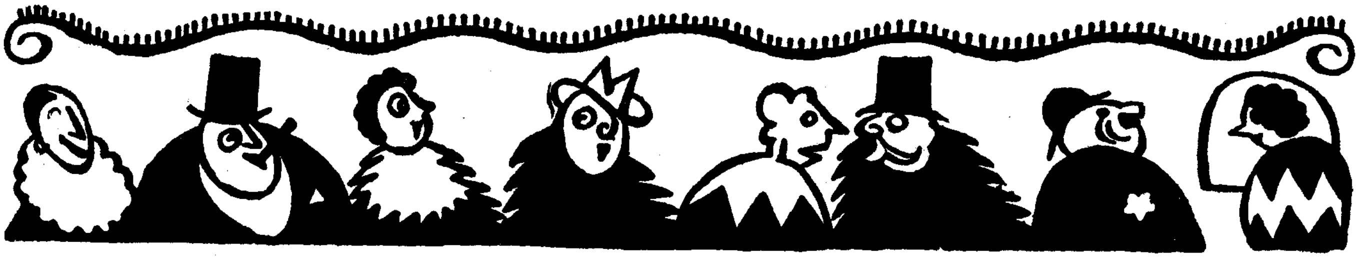

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

The Father—A new adaptation, by Richard Nelson, of Strindberg's 1887 tragedy, starring Frank Langella and Gail Strickland. Directed by Clifford Williams. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Hope Zone—Olympia Dukakis plays Countess Wilhelmena Deach, an A.A. adherent and the owner of a run-down Maryland resort, in this piece by Kevin Heelan. Previews begin Dec. 20. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's newest drama, about a woman whose vision is restored after a lifetime of blindness, stars Catherine Byrne and Jason Robards. Mr. Friel is the director. Previews begin Dec. 26. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Patience—Presented by the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players. Dec. 29 at 8 and Dec. 30-31 at 3 and 8. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

Paul Robeson—Avery Brooks reprises his 1988 performance as the actor and singer in this brief holiday engagement of Phillip Hayes Dean's play. Harold Scott is the director. Opens Dec. 20 at 7:30 and continues through Dec. 31. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

True Crimes—The Smoky Mountains are the setting for Romulus Linney's new work, about a man seduced into committing a murder. Previews begin Dec. 28. Opens Dec. 31 at 8. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109.)

The Universe—Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theatre presents the final work in his trilogy. Previews begin Dec. 28. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

When Ladies Battle—Eugène Scribe and Ernest Legouvé's 1851 romantic farce, in a new translation by Michael Feingold. In previews through Dec. 23. Opens Dec. 24 at 2. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Wonderful Time—Josh Hamilton has the lead in a new romantic comedy by Jonathan Marc Sherman. Previews begin Dec. 28. (WPA, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

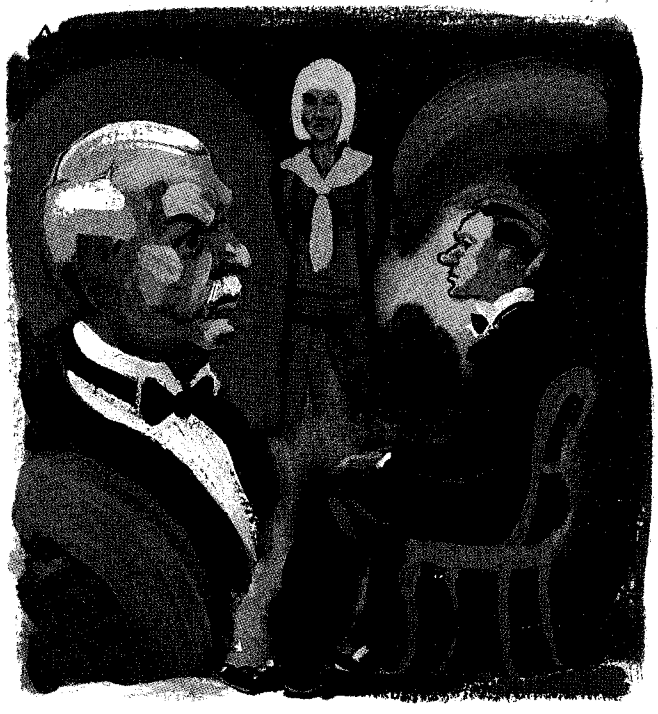
OPENED RECENTLY

Bring In 'da Noise/Bring In 'da Funk—In attempting not only to return tap to black culture but to give black culture back to tap, director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover have made a drama that charts, with heroic energy, the evolution of the African-American beat from its rural Southern beginnings to its Northern urbanization and on to its present hip-hop incarnation in the choreography of Glover and his homeboy hoofers. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/4/95.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 14.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company presents "What You Said," a revue featuring its ever-popular five-minute musical. (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

A Christmas Carol—Terrence Mann and Ben Vereen lead a cast of ninety. The score is by Alan Menken. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Closes Dec. 31.)

Dangerous Corner—As directed by David Mamet, the characters in J. B. Priestley's 1932 mystery—a meditation on the fragile interconnectedness of people's lives—don't seem connected at all. The biggest mystery is why everyone onstage seems so strangely wooden. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 31.)



Tom Lacy, Laura Linney, and Tony Goldwyn, in "Holiday."

JAMES MCMILLAN

Dick Gregory Live—The comic makes his Off Broadway début. Presented by the Negro Ensemble Company. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Double Identity—The message in this Yiddish musical comedy (based on a Sholom Aleichem story) is clear: it's hard to be a Jew. The actors perform with conviction, especially Zypora Spaisman—the matriarch of Yiddish theatre—whose uncomplicated gestures say a great deal. In Yiddish. (Simultaneous English or Russian translation is available.) (Folksbiene Playhouse, 123 E. 55th St.755-2231.)

The Food Chain—Although the situations in Nicky Silver's new play are familiar and sitcom-ish, the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Fool Moon—Clowning and music with Bill Irwin, David Shiner, and North Carolina's Red Clay Ramblers. (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 7.)

Hello, Dolly!—There is much to like about Carol Channing—the comic timing, the speaking voice, the star quality—but the evening is one long curtain call, and a bit of a strain on the nerves, as she attempts to prove over and over that she can do it all as well in her seventies as she could in her forties. Lee Roy Reams directed. (11/27/95) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Holiday—In this very enjoyable production of Philip Barry's 1928 classic, Laura Linney, as the rich but principled Linda Seton, and Tony Goldwyn, as the up-and-coming Johnny Case, fulfill the too often botched premise of romantic comedy: that wit must spring from delayed satisfaction. Reg Rogers contributes a hilarious turn as Linda's bibulous brother. David Warren directed, resourcefully. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 7.)

Jam On the Groove—Ten loose-limbed numbers—including a slapstick shadow dance, a martial-arts fantasia, a dance-noir detective story, and a shirtless six-man undulation that could serve as a master class on abdominal development—show off the impressive range of hip-hop choreography. All the dancers get the chance to flaunt their patented wiggles and spins, and the house rocks with a sort of call-and-response encouragement from the audience. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting Ibsen's 1888 drama, "The Lady from the Sea," in rotating repertory with a solid staging of Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Jingle Belles—The Lady Bunny, Varla Jean Merman, and Sherry Vine celebrate the holidays in spike heels with a new drag revue. (Westbeth Theatre, 151 Bank Street. 741-0391. Dec. 22-23 at 9.)

Master Class—In Terrence McNally's new play, Zoe Caldwell plays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Misanthrope—Falstaff Presents has created a vivid reworking of Molière's arch

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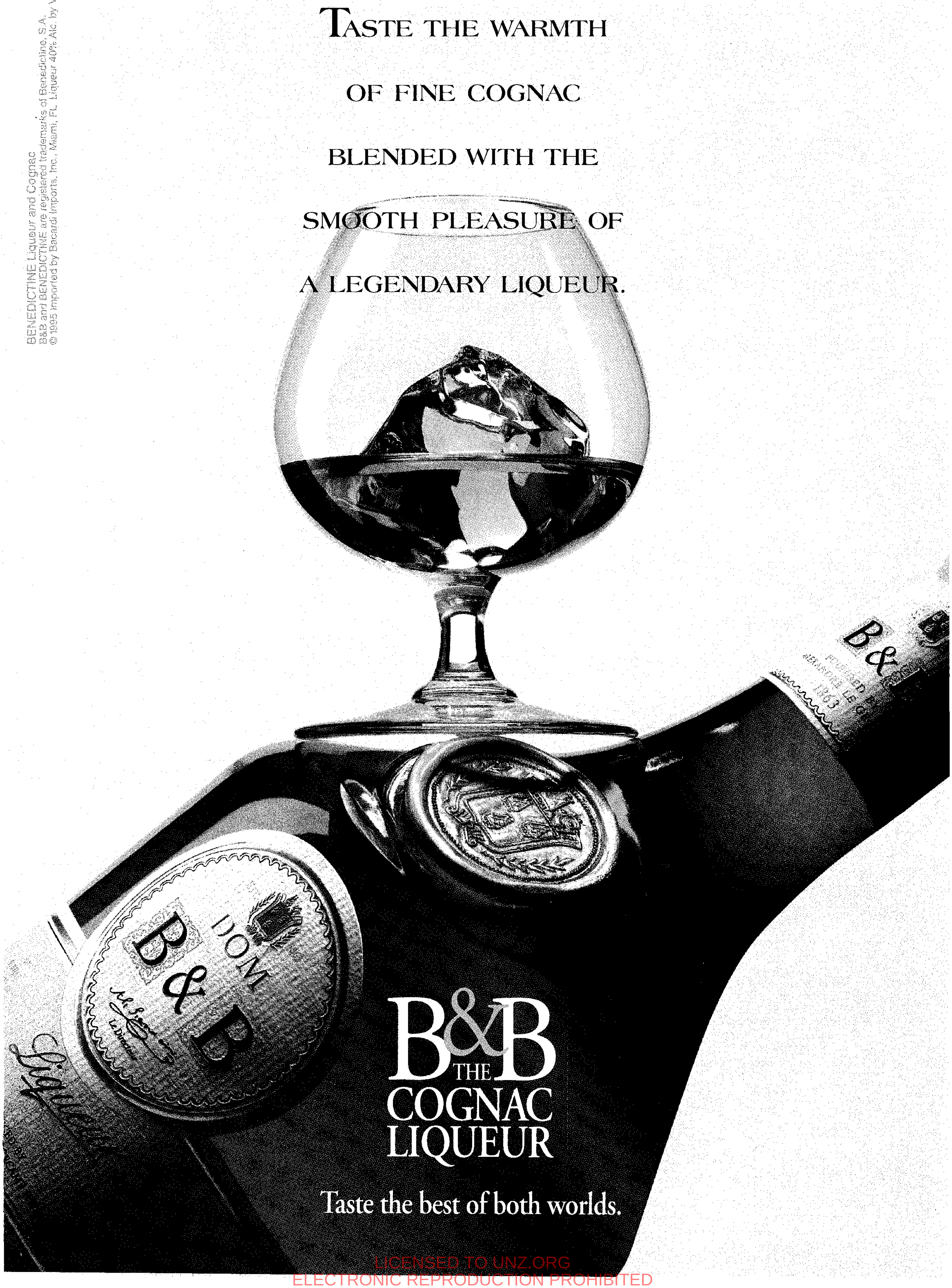
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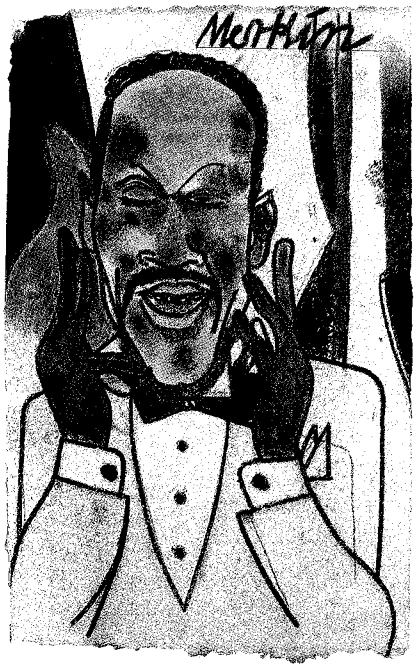
comedy of social masks gone awry, set in the nineteen-twenties. The rhymed couplets in contemporary English are sometimes too contemporary, but they form a sly, charming connection to the original, and the cast (particularly the self-possessed Matt Servitto, who plays Philinte) is smart and strong. Unfortunately, the director, Peter Francis James, seems to have decided by the end that the play is really a tragedy: he smothers the wit under shrillness, and the high drama he's trying to create drags down the couplets and the stylized acting that suit satire so well. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 803-5443. Closes Dec. 23.)



Avery Brooks, in "Paul Robeson."

RICHARD MERKIN

Mrs. Klein—Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama dissects the tempestuous relationship between two London psychoanalysts, the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins). Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Molière's Shorts—This Actors Shakespeare Company production, an adaptation of four of the playwright's comedies, throws vaudeville routines, Marx Brothers jokes, and other elements into the mix. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 255-6895. Closes Dec. 23.)

Moon Over Buffalo—Ken Ludwig's backstage farce is as forgettable as Carol Burnett is not: our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Murder at Minsing Manor: A Nancy-Boys Mystery—Another broad, antic romp by the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, in which an aging temptress (Everett Quinton) may or may not have dispatched her sugar daddy. The satire of church, state, and the Hardy Boys is right on target. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 14.)

New England—The crack cast members in Richard Nelson's latest play portray seven Britons and a Frenchwoman living in America who gather in Connecticut to mourn a death but end up complaining about their adopted country. The crowning irony is that they've all chosen to live here. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Dec. 22.)

Nixon's Nixon—A new play by Russell Lees, set during a secret meeting on the night before the President's resignation. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes Dec. 23.)

Northeast Local—Tom Donaghy's drama, which begins in the early sixties and ends in the early nineties, stars Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Anthony LaPaglia as a working-class couple who come together and then break apart. Both the writing and the performances make for an uneven evening, but LaPaglia gives the play an authenticity it wouldn't otherwise have. Gerald Gutierrez directed. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 7.)

Nunsense—The musical about the order of the Little Sisters of Hoboken. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. Closes Dec. 31.)

Oblivion Postponed—It's hard not to be cynical about a drama that merely rounds up the usual suspects: two gay men (one jaded and sarcastic, the other sweet and tolerant) from New York, and a middle-aged married pair (he's an angry, closed-off jerk, and she's a wounded bird, vulnerable yet open to new experiences) from that good-for-a-gag state Ohio. In this first play by Ron Nyswaner, who wrote the screenplay for "Philadelphia," the two couples meet in Rome, and guess what happens? Pesto, chango—they're all transformed into wiser, more loving human beings. Some very good actors (John Glover, Mary Beth Hurt, David Aaron Baker, Tony Gillan, and James Rebhorn) do the best they can with this recycled material, which is directed by Nicholas Martin. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes Jan. 6.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, is not so much a play of ideas as a play of notions, about art, science, the twentieth century (oh, *that* old thing). It features Einstein (Mark Nelson) and Picasso (Tim Hopper) sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world, and contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor—but there's a certain sourness to the proceedings which may put you off. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Quills—A Grand Guignol take on the Marquis de Sade's final imprisonment, at the Charenton asylum outside Paris, complete with wildly abandoned performances, spooky lighting, a surreal set, rich costumes, and macabre humor. This de Sade (Rocco Sisto) is a childlike character who has once again been sent to his room—to no avail: he finds a way to record his lewd and blasphemous tales (which he reads to the audience) no matter how many of his privileges, beginning with his quills and paper, are taken away. Doug Wright's drama points out the slippery nature of morality a couple of times too many, perhaps, but it's thought-provoking, frightening, often very funny, and full of delicious dirty talk. The cast is strong, and Lola Pashalinski is hilarious as the Marquise. Directed by Howard Shalwitz. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Dec. 22.)

Racing Demon—David Hare's 1990 drama is an examination of spiritual politics in the Anglican Church as played out in a conflict between two priests in a poor part of London, and it asks questions that go beyond the merely parochial. Richard Eyre, who directed, has assembled a fine cast that is able to bring Hare's big ideas to life: Josef Sommer and Michael Cumpsty play the priests at odds with each other; Brian Murray and Paul Giamatti are delightful as their associates; and Kathleen Chalfant, George N. Martin, and John C. Venema are all memorable in smaller roles. (12/11/95) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 31.)

Swinging on a Star—A stylish, heartfelt showcase for Johnny Burke's songs. The cast and band are nearly perfect; the show was written and directed by Michael Leeds and choreographed, brilliantly, by Kathleen Marshall. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Tempest—In George C. Wolfe's acrylic version, the pyrotechnics (drummers, Indonesian shadow puppets, Brazilian stilt walkers) and the Prospero (Patrick Stewart) excite the audience without illuminating it; you leave remembering the sounds and the spectacle but not one vivid line of the poetry. (12/4/95) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 31.)

Too Jewish?—Avi Hoffman sets about reviving Yiddish in this mixture of songs and stories. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Valley Song—The South African playwright Athol Fugard appears with Lisa Gay Hamilton in his new drama, about the effects of political change in his homeland. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) patchwork. The leggy Rachel York, as a blond bimbo, at least enjoys herself—and the audience enjoys her, too. (11/20/95) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Wasp and Other Plays—Four new one-acts by Steve Martin. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 7.)

Zombies from the Beyond—The many songs in James Valcq's musical sendup of fifties science-fiction movies are funny, and the cast—particularly Claire Morkin, as the competent ingénue who has to save the world's men from the lascivious Zombettes—is cartoonish perfection. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

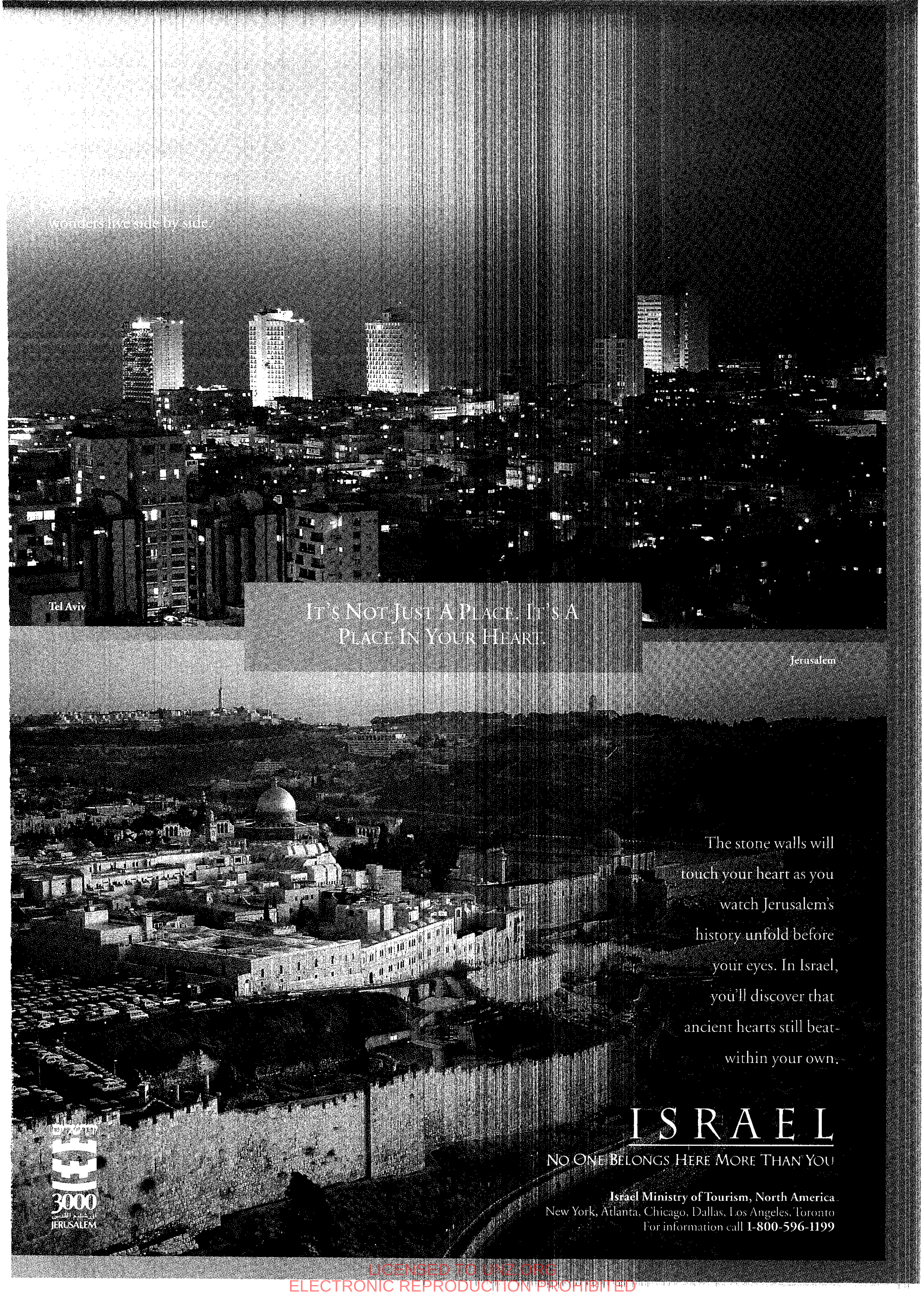
LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 7.) . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HAVING OUR SAY:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. (Closes Dec. 31.) . . . **THE HEIRESS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. (Closes Dec. 31.) . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **SYLVIA:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—"The Nutcracker" continues through prime toy season: Dec. 20-21 and Dec. 27-28 at 6; Dec. 22-23 and Dec. 30, at 2 and 8; Dec. 24 at 1 and 5; Dec. 29 at 8; and Dec. 31 at 1 and 7. . . . ¶ The company returns to repertory works on Jan. 2 with "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Tarantella," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "Who Cares?" (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre—Dec. 20 at 2 and Dec. 23 at 8: "Night Creature," "Treading," "Rainbow 'Round My Shoul-



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der," and "The Winter in Lisbon." . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: "Hymn," "Fandango," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: "Fathers and Sons," "Vespers," and "The Winter in Lisbon." . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Cry," "Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 2 and Dec. 26 at 8: "Carmina Burana" and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 7:30: "Fathers and Sons," "Fandango," and "Riverside." . . . ¶ Dec. 27 at 2: "Blues Suite," "Cry," "Vespers," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 27 at 8: "Fathers and Sons," "Scissors Paper Stone," "Urban Folk Dance," and "Hymn." . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 8: "Riverside," "Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," and "Memoria." . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at 8: "Memoria," "Vespers," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 30 at 2: "Blues Suite," "Treading," and "Carmina Burana." . . . ¶ Dec. 30 at 8: "Hymn," "Fandango," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 31 at 7:30: "Fathers and Sons," "Riverside," and "Revelations." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

ELIZABETH STREB/RINGSIDE—Variously using portable walls, a seventeen-foot-high pole, and a fantastically sprung trampoline, the dancers run through their improbable signature moves: "skudges," slams, body pops, suicide dives, inside-outs, and castaways. The choreographer Elizabeth Streb says, "I don't feel I have an agenda for the audience. They come with their own, obviously. But if it works I can suspend a certain kind of expectation and take them for a ride: a pure physical experience." In the current engagement, the slender, athletic Streb performs solo in "Little Ease," and her company performs "Up!," "Rise," "Bounce," "Wall," "Surface" (with Streb), and "Freeflight." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Dec. 20-22, Dec. 26, and Dec. 28-29, all at 8; Dec. 23, Dec. 27, and Dec. 30, all at 2 and 8; and Dec. 31 at 2.)

"WHITE"—The choreographer and performance artist Ann Carlson collaborates with composers Pierce Turner and Andy Kirshner, installation artist Todd Gilens, and video artist Mary Ellen Strom on an evening-length work that features large pedestrians, blind dancers, nuns, and the choreographer on a pedestal in a wedding gown. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Dec. 20-23 at 8.)

"DANCE IN PROGRESS"—Stanley Love, Fausto Matias, Lisa Race, Valerie Striar, and Andrea Mills present works and lead a discussion as part of the Kitchen's series on emerging choreographers, curated by Neil Greenberg. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Dec. 20-21 at 8.)

JOSÉ GRECO AND FRIENDS—The flamenco dancer, raised in Seville and Brooklyn, who was a headliner at such thirties nightspots as the Hippodrome and La Conga, joins Roberto Castellón, Luis Vargas, Anastasia Iordanidis, and Lola Zalamea in a performance, a screening of his appearances in "Sombrero" and "Around the World in Eighty Days," and a discussion. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. Dec. 21 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

GEORGE WINSTON—The pianist. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Dec. 22 at 8.)

PHISH—With the Dead now officially retired, it could be argued that these two sold-out shows augur the start of the Phish era. Things could be worse: Vermont's favorite laid-back combo has risen to the stadium level through ten years of extensive touring—and without the benefit of a single radio hit. Still, after listening to their recent double album, "A Live One," it's hard to see what all the fuss is about. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Dec. 30-31 at 8.)

NEW Year in York
1996
William Wilson

Living it up on New Year's Eve.

MARILYN MANSON—The Sunshine State's darkest export offers a nineties version of Alice Cooper funnelled through the hardcore-industrial aesthetic of Trent Reznor, the group's mentor and producer. According to the liner notes for the band's début, "Portrait of an American Family," Twiggy Ramirez plays "base tendencies," while Manson, the singer, is responsible for "accusations, child manipulations, backwards masking, Polaroids." (Band members take their names from female icons and famed serial killers.) Manson's membership in the Church of Satan and his fondness for simulated onanism with marital aids whose size would have made the Marquis de Sade covetous have gotten the band in hot water with the Christian Coalition—a fact which no doubt gives them pleasure, not to mention press coverage and sales. With the Lunachicks. (Academy, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Dec. 31 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

A.K.A., 77 W. Houston St., at Wooster St. (673-7325)—Hip-hop, jazz, and world beat meet in this small, velvet-draped club.

BLARNEY STAR, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. Dec. 31: **BUSTER POINDEXTER.**

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Dec. 20: **RUN ON.** Their début, "On/Off," sounded as if it had been written and recorded in an afternoon, but it was altogether too ingenious and brainy to qualify as your average slacker output. "Start Packing," their latest, shows that the boys have been working on their craft. Live, they've been known to make a mighty impressive noise. Dec. 31: Spend New Year's Eve with two local favorites, **BABE THE BLUE OX** and the **VERY PLEASANT NEIGHBOR.**

CAFÉ SIN-É, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront usually given over to a young and friendly crowd. Dec. 27: Jack McKeever.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Rock and roll always sounds best in a dump, which may be why this legendary club is still thriving.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Dec. 22-23: **JAMES COTTON.** There are only a handful of world-class blues harmonica players, and Cotton is one of the finest. Tutored as a teen-ager by the legendary Sonny Boy Williamson II, he made his first recording for Sam Phillips's Sun Records in 1953 (as a member of Howlin' Wolf's band) and spent over a decade as Muddy Waters' harp player during the golden age of Chicago blues. After all these years, he still has his chops. The harmonica fest continues on Dec. 31 with **JUNIOR WELLS,** whose recent albums have been among his best.

DOWNTIME, 251 W. 30th St. (695-2747)—A friendly split-level bar with a dazzling quasi-Cubist paint job and an above-average pool table.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** are in the house every Friday night.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

FLANNERY'S, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).

IBIS SUPPER CLUB, 327 W. 44th St. (262-1111)—Live music, belly dancing, and an honest-to-God whirling dervish, every Wednesday through Sunday.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—A sprawling two-floor establishment that has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Dec. 29-30: The **BOGMEN.** Dec. 31: **HEALTH AND HAPPINESS SHOW.** This sprightly band, led by ex-Bongo James Mastro, called its 1993 début "Tonic," and its blend of country, folk, and rock is just that. Thanks to the exciting addition of ex-Television

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guitarist Richard Lloyd, "Instant Living," the group's latest, has a decidedly harder edge. With **FROM GOOD HOMES**. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—An unassuming basement restaurant-bar, where you can drink cheap and catch live music nightly. Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. Dec. 21: **ROOMFUL OF BLUES.** Dec. 29-31: Little Mike and the Tornadoes.

Match, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Monday night, thanks to the **SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND.** Dining.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Dec. 23: Sometime Lemonhead **EVAN DANDO.** Dec. 28: The **MARTINIS,** a new combo featuring former members of the Pixies. Dec. 31: **SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS,** a group of psychobilly swamp rockers from Chapel Hill whose songs are populated with characters that would have frightened Carson McCullers. There's lots of fried chicken, go-go dancing, and bear wrestling. Years of touring recently earned the group its first major-label release, "Dirt Track Date," on Geffen.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Dec. 21: Hank. Dec. 27: Blues terror **BARRENCE WHITFIELD.** Dec. 29: **GARY LUCAS' GODS AND MONSTERS.**

Monkey Bar, 60 E. 54th St. (838-2600)—Beyond the monkey murals, there's a bright see-and-be-seen dining arena that's perfect for committing high-profile indiscretions in a strapless gown. But the place to be is the dark and crowded bar up front, by the grand piano, where the bar stools look like stuffed olives. You perch on the pimiento. Dining.

Nell's, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop.

Paddy Reilly's Music Bar, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**BLACK 47** plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dec. 30: **THE MIGHTY SPARROW.** Dec. 31: **TITO PUENTE.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Dec. 28: **JOE GRUSHECKY,** whose last appearance at this Chelsea roadhouse was sold out in seconds thanks to a rumored guest appearance by his producer, Bruce Springsteen. This time, the Boss is off on his own tour. Dec. 29: **DELBERT MC CLINTON.** Over the course of a long, meandering career that has included teaching John Lennon a few harmonica tricks, in 1962, writing Emmylou Harris's "Two More Bottles of Wine," in 1978, and scoring with his own soulful 1981 hit, "Giving It Up for Your Love," this raucous West Texas singer has remained an uncategorizable treasure. Dec. 31: **THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS.** It's been a decade since John Flansburgh and John Linnell first performed jerky little pop songs while wearing improbably enormous masks. The Brooklyn-based duo have been unmasked for some time, but their jerky little pop songs—precociously crafted and full of surreal humor—flow unabated.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—**EL VEZ,** "the Mexican Elvis," is your host on Dec. 27. Mr. Vez is far more than your run-of-the-mill Elvis impersonator: he claims to be the illegitimate man-child of the King and Charo. He sings in Spanish and wears a layered Velcro outfit that he slowly unpeels and tosses into the audience.This appearance will feature holiday classics like "Navidad Blanca." With tender vocal support from the Elvetts. Dec. 31: Ring in the New Year with the **SCREAMING HEADLESS TORSOS.**

TABLES FOR TWO

Dining around town

Oceana, 55 E. 54th St. (759-5941)—You feel for the rack of lamb at Oceana. It arrives on a bed of couscous, toasted barley, and baby green beans, plump and juicy and looking rather proud of itself, but you can't help wanting to console it. That poor lamb is the lone meat dish at what has become a very serious seafood restaurant. A meal at Oceana, with its upstairs and downstairs dining rooms and its handsome mirror-and-wood décor, is like a visit to an exclusive yacht club.

So seafood is what you get: Montauk blackfish in a black-truffle vinaigrette; sautéed Pacific rockfish served with a mock risotto of winter squash and wild mushrooms; a thick, crustacean-crazed bouillabaisse threaded with soba noodles, all superbly prepared by chef Rick Moonen, an outgoing charmer and a fish fanatic. Moonen grew up in Queens, and his professional background includes time at such prestigious seafood institutions as Le Cirque and the Water Club.

Recently, Moonen invited a few friends to spend a little time with his obsession: oysters. Oceana's gourmet mollusks (which can be enjoyed raw, dusted with ossetra caviar, or steamed with ginger, shallots, and chili peppers) were presented with a choice of libations: champagne, dry sherry, and Guinness (surprising, but satisfying). The guests were happy. So was Moonen. "I wouldn't even consider opening a restaurant that didn't serve oysters," he told us. "It's a bonding thing." (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner; Saturdays for dinner only. Prix fixe, $48; tasting menu, $70.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** is at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room through Dec. 31. Dining.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery. Dec. 22-23: The Michael Raye band. Drummer **PETE (LA ROCA) SIMS** (Dec. 29-31) stood in the first row of the second rank when he was coming up in the sixties, but now he's firmly ensconced in the big leagues. He leads a spirited band that is a bit hampered by shifting personnel, but nabbing Dave Leibman, the great soprano saxophonist, was a major coup. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jazz, mirrors, and a gift shop. Through Dec. 24: the **JOE HENDERSON DOUBLE RAINBOW** sextet. As more and more of Stan Getz started creeping into Henderson's understated style, it was probably inevitable that he, too, would turn to Brazilian music and the extraordinary songs of Antonio Carlos Jobim. And not since Getz has any saxophonist so effortlessly melded melody and sinuous rhythm. In performance, he rarely goes beyond a minimalist accompaniment of bass and drums, but when he confronts the bossa nova he gets a tad more adventurous: the Double Rainbow sextet features guitar, trumpet, and piano. Sax poster boy **DAVID SANBORN** is in Dec. 26-31. The **NANCY WILSON** trio takes over on Jan. 2. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. Dining.

Café Pierre, 2 E. 61st St. (940-8185)—Vocalist-pianist **KATHLEEN LANDIS** performs standards and show tunes every Thursday through Saturday. Dining.

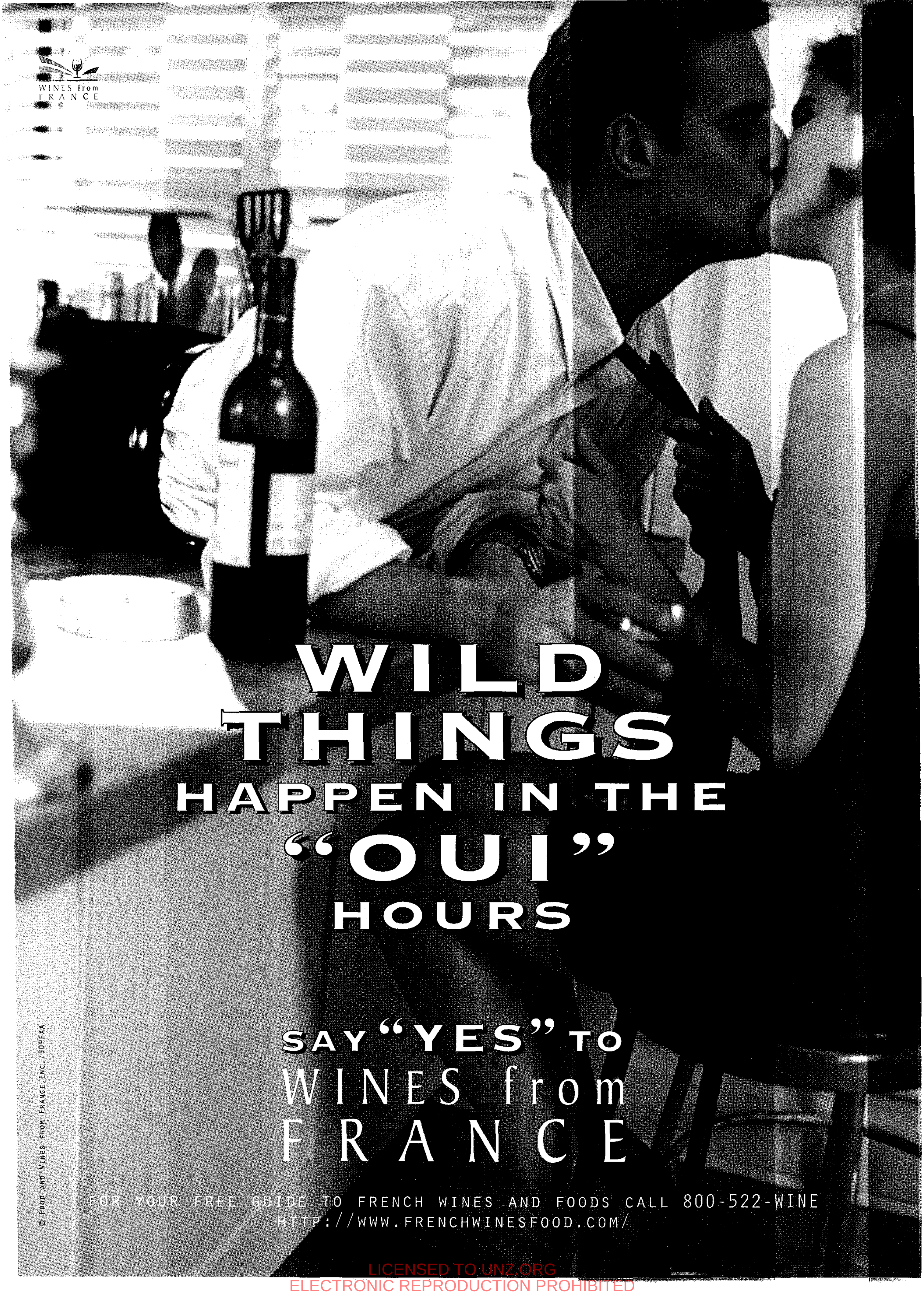
Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—After twenty-eight years at the Café Carlyle, **BOBBY SHORT** is polished to such a high gloss that he's almost blinding to behold. Everything he does is breathlessly paced: tempos accelerate, notes ascend, hands clap, teeth flash. His speech has the arcane ring that comes from travelling in glamorous circles (if not in the real world, certainly in his head): "You're a knock-out!" "What an audience!" "How chic!" "Wow!" Just as your attention begins to flag, he shifts gears and does ten minutes of blues with cheeky conviction. But all his mannerisms really come into focus the minute he sings Cole Porter, which turns everything else into a warmup ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel dungeon deep in the heart of the meat district. Dec. 30: **BY ANY MEANS.** Drummer Rashied Ali, bassist William Parker, and saxophonist Charles Gayle are heavyweights in an underdog genre that keeps the spirits of sixties-era Ayler and Coltrane with us and gives conniptions to today's reigning conservatives. Call them the Monsters of Neo-Expressionist Jazz. For some, Gayle and his cohorts represent the ultimate in turbulent beauty; for others, they represent turbulence, period. Either way, you can't fault their determination, energy, or inspiration.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Set in a mammoth turn-of-the-century ballroom, this jazz club is all marble and gilt, with a few modern touches, such as the zebra-patterned carpet in the V.I.P. room upstairs. Dec. 30-31: The Philip Hamilton group. Dining.

Grand Hyatt, Park Ave. at Grand Central Terminal (1-201 643-4303)—Dec. 31: Vocalist **DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER** joins the **FRANK**



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IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through Dec. 24: the **SONNY SIMMONS** trio and the **DAVID MURRAY** quintet. In the early sixties, altoist Simmons was a West Coast Ornette Coleman: a ferocious avant-gardist with a savage tone, rhythmic verve, and enough blues to keep it honest. But the decades passed, and he retreated into footnotedom. Last year, with the release of "Ancient Ritual," Simmons returned, as bloodthirsty as ever. His gigs here last year were house-rocking affairs. Murray may have had his thunder stolen by the neo-con explosion, but he's still a contender capable of toppling buildings with his galvanic tenor-saxophone work. Dec. 26-31: The **ROY HARGROVE** quintet. Feisty, historically aware, and blessed with a brassy, ringing tone, this trumpeter has everything except a defining personality. He's young yet, but his boundless energy bodes well for the future.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. Dec. 20-23: Piano and bass with Russ Kassoff and Linc Milliman. Dec. 27-31: More piano and bass with Judy Carmichael and Mike Hashim.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 23: Guitarist **MARK RIBOT** and bassist **JAMAALADEEN TACUMA.** Dec. 26-28: **JOHN ZORN'S MASADA.**

LE MADELEINE, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **GENE BERTONCINI** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. **LESLEY GORE** is the current diva-in-residence. It's her party through early January. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and the Kit McClure sextet, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

ST. REGIS HOTEL, 2 E. 55th St. (339-6857)—Vocalist and pianist Kurt Wieting performs standards every Friday and Saturday. Dining.

SARDI'S, 234 W. 44th St. (221-8444)—The Joe Traina quintet performs on Friday evenings. Dining.

SMALLS, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—A contender in New York's ever-changing jazz topography, this aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

SUPPER CLUB, 20 W, 47th St. (921-1940)—Dec. 31: Return to the sweet sepia tones of the swing era with Stan Rubin and his fourteen-piece band. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A jazz outpost where the musicians are always top-shelf. Dec. 19-24: The **MARK CARY** band. Dec. 26-31: The **NAT ADDERLEY** quintet. Jan. 1: A New Year's Day brunch with the **DOC CHEATHAM** quartet. Starting Jan. 2: the **BLUE NOTE ALL-STARS.**

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Dec. 22: **FREDDIE HUBBARD.** Despite all the missteps of his thirty-five-year career, from ill-advised trend hopping to leaping on commercial bandwagons better left alone, this trumpeter's stature—he is one of the great brassmen of modern jazz—remains inarguable. At his best, he pulls together classic hard-bop soulfulness with the questing vision of the modal pioneers of the sixties; at his worst, he's a floundering funkmeister. He's been having some lip trouble, but his latest recording, "MMTC (Monk, Miles, Trane and Cannon)" is a noble return to form.

"21," 21 W. 52nd St. (582-7200)—Dec. 31: Chanteuse **BARBARA COOK** and the Jerry Kravat Orchestra ring in the New Year. Black tie, dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. **EASTERN REBELLION** (through Dec. 24) is a quartet that's built from the rhythm section up. The founding members, pianist Cedar Walton and drummer Billy Higgins, along with bassist David Williams, lay down a velvet carpet on which the excellent sax player Vincent Herring rides. When Walton and Higgins are in top form, the interplay among the foursome can border on the profound. Dec. 26-31: **DR. MICHAEL WHITE'S ORIGINAL LIBERTY JAZZ BAND OF NEW ORLEANS.** The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. *(673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where* the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Dec. 18-23: Piano and bass with Jane Jarvis and Milt Hinton. Dec. 24: Guitarist **JACK WILKINS** and bassist **HARVIE SWARTZ,** two undervalued mainstream players whose only professional drawback is middle age. Swartz has a special affinity for guitarists, while Wilkins never lets his virtuosity steamroll his partner. Dec. 26-31: A trio featuring **JOHN BUNCH, BOB HAGGART,** and **BUCKY PIZZARELLI.**

RADIO WEST 43RD STREET

Twenty-five favorites from our 1995 album-oriented playlist.

WRECKING BALL, Emmylou Harris (Elektra).
FOREVER BLUE, Chris Isaak (Reprise).
RELISH, Joan Osborne (Mercury).
MUSIC FOR ALL OCCASIONS, The Mavericks (M.C.A.).
ALL YOU CAN EAT, k.d. lang (Warner Bros.).
THE GOLD EXPERIENCE, ⚥ (Warner Bros.).
POST, Björk (Elektra).
EVERYTHING IS WRONG, Moby (Elektra).
MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE "CASINO" (M.C.A.).
100% FUN, Matthew Sweet (Zoo).
MIRROR BALL, Neil Young (Reprise).
DUMMY, Portishead (London).
COAST TO COAST MOTEL, G. Love & Special Sauce (Epic).
FOO FIGHTERS, Foo Fighters (Capitol).
SOMETHING TO REMEMBER, Madonna (Maverick).
DAYS LIKE THIS, Van Morrison (A&M).
GARBAGE, Garbage (Geffen).
ELECTR-O-PURA, Yo La Tengo (Matador).
MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE "WAITING TO EXHALE" (Arista).
MAXINQUAYE, Tricky (Island).
THE GREAT ESCAPE, Blur (Virgin).
(WHAT'S THE STORY) MORNING GLORY?, Oasis (Epic).
WEEZER, Weezer (Geffen).
YES, Morphine (Rykodisk).
THE BENDS, Radiohead (Capitol).

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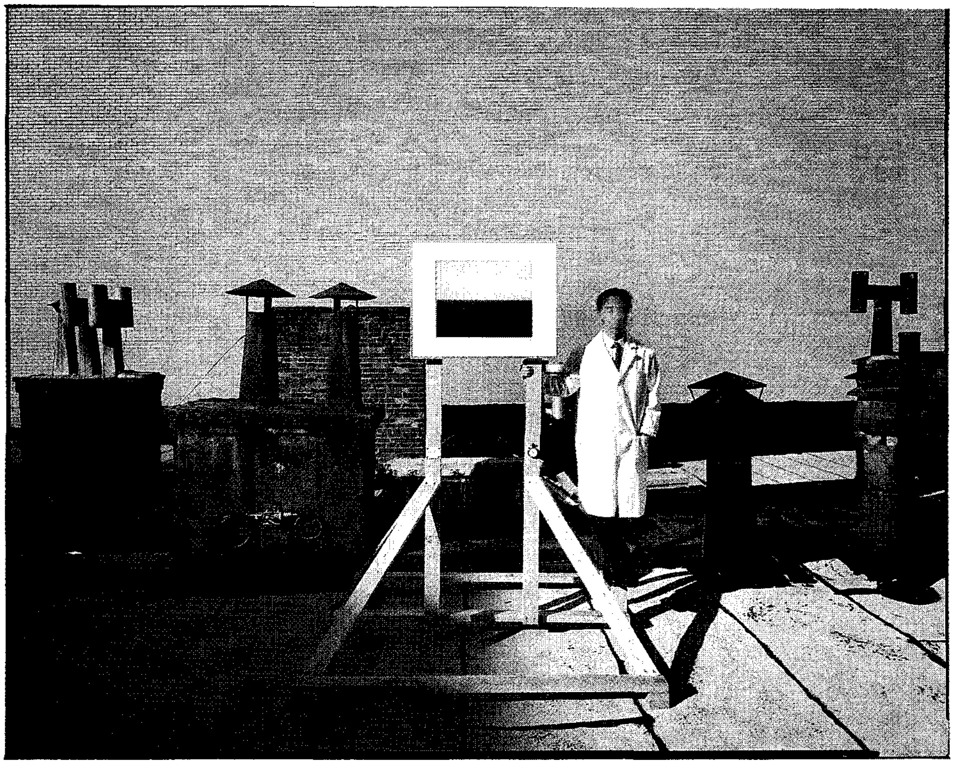
PACIFICA VACATIONS

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Haute Couture." Detail and tailoring are the focus in the Costume Institute's examination of high fashion since 1870, from Worth to Lacroix. Through March 24. . . . ¶ Black-and-white photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto, chosen from three different series: "Seascapes," "Motion Pictures," and "Hall of Thirty-three Bays." Through Jan. 14. . . . ¶ "Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt." Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "John Singleton Copley in America." Paintings, pastels, and miniatures by the first American artist to achieve international renown. The exhibition presents works executed before 1774, the year the loyalist Copley departed for England; the consensus is that his plain-spoken, quintessentially American portraits far surpass in quality and psychological acuity the smooth product he later churned out after the manner of Gainsborough and Reynolds. Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "Goya in the Metropolitan Museum of Art." Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ "Howard Hodgkin: Paintings 1975-1995." Through Jan. 28. . . . ¶ In the Medieval Sculpture Hall, a twenty-foot artificial blue spruce decorated with eighteenth-century Neapolitan angels and cherubs shares the floor with crèche figures from the same set. There is a lighting ceremony on Fridays and Saturdays at 7. Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)



Self-portrait by Hiroshi Sugimoto (Metropolitan Museum).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944," a hundred and sixty paintings and drawings, and a re-creation of the artist's last studio. Through Jan. 23. . . . ¶ "Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George," a large trove of photographs from the twenties and thirties, many never before exhibited, taken at Stieglitz's upstate retreat. Through Jan. 2. . . . ¶ A small show of works from the seventies to the present by the French Conceptualist Annette Messager, who combines photographed, painted, and drawn images with found and constructed objects and text. Through Jan. 16. . . . ¶ Uta Barth, Joseph Bartscherer, Ulrich Görlich, and Eric Rondepierre have contributed new photographs and site-specific installations to "New Photography 11." Through Jan. 9. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, except Christmas and New Year's Day, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology." Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ "Joel-Peter Witkin," a mid-career retrospective of the photographer's astonishing and horrifying œuvre. Through Jan. 14. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, except Christmas, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965," a loving, ambitious tribute to the angry young men of the era that nevertheless doesn't really solve the perennial problem of literature-based exhibitions: books in glass cases have little to say to people who haven't read them. Yet there are lively paintings—doodles, really—by Kerouac and Burroughs and a family-snapshot album of the movement by Ginsberg. Anyone who was a teen-ager during those years will feel the numinous pull of the manuscript of "Howl" and of the Teletype-paper roll on which Kerouac typed "On the Road." Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ "Robert Frank: Moving Out," a large retrospective of the photographer's career. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ In the lobby gallery, several box constructions and collages by Joseph Cornell are on view. Through March 10. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8. Closes at 5 on Dec. 24.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Aerial photographs of pre-Columbian ruins and other sites in Peru, by Marilyn Bridges. Through Feb. 1. . . . ¶ On Dec. 29, a traditional African marketplace, with music and dance performances, will rise in celebration of Kwanzaa, which means, in Swahili, "the first fruits of the harvest." . . . ¶ Origami arachnids and mandrills, meteorites and sequoias adorn the fourteen-foot Christmas tree here, while a large number of origami dinosaurs have taken up residence beneath it. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Star of Christmas," in the Hayden Planetarium. The Three Wise Men. Bethlehem. Who knew? This celestial show gives the views of historians, theologians, linguists, and astronomers on the ancient story. Through Jan. 1. (For more information, call 769-5100.) (Open daily, except Christmas, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—"A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion." Fifty examples of the stylish inspirations of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973): evening gloves with reptilian scales; a day suit with metallic ladybugs, grasshoppers, and cockroaches creeping across it; a hat of celluloid grapes; and more. Through March 24. . . . ¶ "Leon Polk Smith: American Painter," a retrospective of large geometric abstractions, most of them on oddly shaped canvases, by an eighty-nine-year-old artist who was inspired sixty years ago by his first sight of a Mondrian. Through Jan. 7. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—The second half of "Worlds Seen and Imagined," a loan exhibition of Japanese screens from the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, in Tokyo, is just as handsome as its predecessor. A screen representing the four seasons (circa 1500) links the conventional images of maple, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and plum with elegantly drifting clouds. "Whose Sleeves?," from the mid-seventeenth century, depicts a lady's boudoir, her kimonos piled up in tasteful disarray—but the lady has vanished, evoking the melancholy of a lover's absence. Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

BUTLER LIBRARY, Columbia University, Broadway at 114th St.—" 'The Tall Swift Shadow of a Ship at Night': Stephen and Cora Crane." The lives and careers of the naturalist writer and his common-law wife are documented in a large selection of books, letters, manuscripts, photographs, and scrapbooks, including first editions of "The Red Badge of Courage" and "Maggie, a Girl of the Streets." Through Feb. 16. (Open Mondays, Christmas, and New Year's Day, noon to 7:45; Tuesdays, except Dec. 26 and Jan. 2, through Fridays, 9 to 4:45.)

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St.—"Refined" doesn't adequately describe the lacquerware boxes in this exquisite exhibition: the word is "perfect." Dating from the sixteenth century to the late eighteenth, they depict scenes and symbols from poetry and legend, using porcelain, gold dust, and semiprecious stones to embellish the gleaming lacquered wood. On the lid of an eighteenth-century inkstone box, two porcelain birds wing above a rocky shoreline made from bits of coral, malachite, and mother-of-pearl, against the fathomless lacquered blackness of the night sky. A jaunty headrest, specially designed to accommodate a lady's elaborate hairdo, has a drawer for a little incense burner, to perfume her hair while she sleeps. The exhibition is lit from above, through frosted glass, which allows these precious objects to glow and smolder like the treasures they are. Through Jan. 14. (Open daily, except Mondays, Dec. 23-24, and Dec. 30-31, from 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change, 1890-1990," a large exhibition of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and graphic works by fifty artists, including Eric Bulatov, Léon Bakst, Marc Chagall, Ilya Kabakov, El Lissitzky, and Komar & Melamid. Through Jan. 28. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—After a visit to "Haute Couture" at the Met, stop by "Uncommon Threads: Three Hundred Years of New York Style," a display of seventy-five full ensembles. In addition to ball gowns and Broadway costumes, there are several pieces with a distinctly democratic air: a "Rosie the Riveter" jumpsuit; a "man's day ensemble," circa 1970 (brushed-denim elephant bell-bottoms with a body-tattoo T-shirt); and

Photography by Beatriz Schiller

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the chocolate-brown uniform of James Jarrett, Jr., who served as the doorman at Henri Bendel for more than seventy years. Through Feb. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. They will be closed Christmas and New Year's Day. Several, as indicated, will be closed at other times during the holidays.)

Rube Goldberg (1883-1970) / **Larry Poons**—Sublime nuttiness by the oddball genius whose proposals for wacky inventions filled his comic strips (among them "Boob McNutt" and "Professor Lucifer Gorgonzola Butts") for sixty years. Thirty-six original strips are included, along with several late sculptures. / New color-field paintings. Both shows through Dec. 30. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St.)

Elie Nadelman (1882-1946)—Sculptures in assorted mediums, including bronze, wood, and marble, plus drawings. Through Dec. 30. (Zabriskie, in its new location, at 41 E. 57th St.)

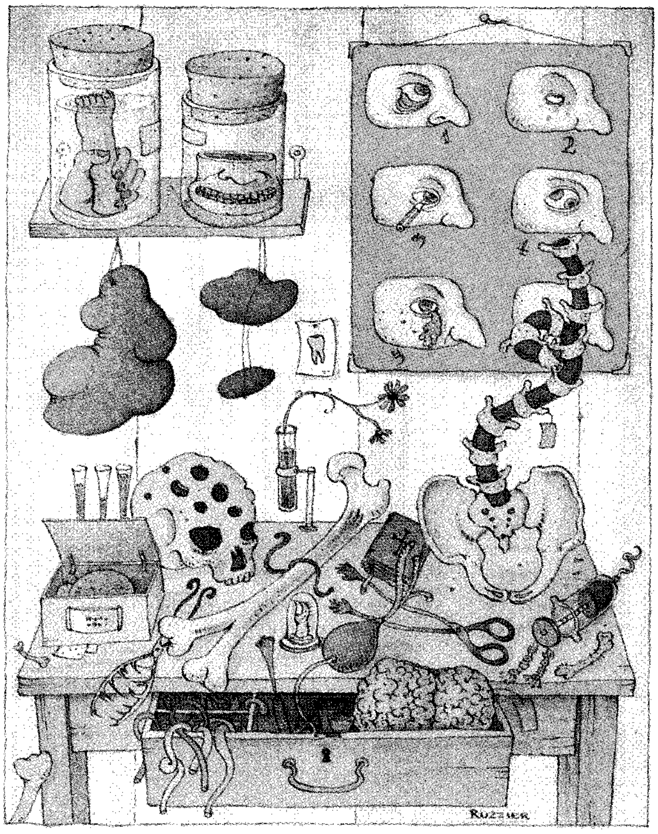
E. Ambrose Webster (1869-1935)—American Impressionism, like most American painting before Abstract Expressionism, was a pale imitation of what was going on in Europe. Webster, anything but pale, was an exception. The compositions of these rocky Azores seascapes are closely patterned on Monet, but the palette is unlike anything in French painting: not reds and blues but shrieking cerise, magenta, and puce. Through Jan. 20. (Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Closes at 2 on Dec. 22; closed Dec. 23-30.)

"Haute Culture: Images of Couture"—This complement to "Haute Couture" at the Met features a selection of drawings and photographs that capture the history of high fashion. The artists include Erté, Horst, Beaton, Penn, Avedon, Newton, Weber, and Snowdon. Through Dec. 22. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

"The Fractured Form: Expressionism and the Human Body"—The fragmented modern condition, as seen in the works of such Austrian and German Expressionists as Lovis Corinth, Hannah Höch, Egon Schiele, and Gustav Klimt. Through Jan. 6. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

DC Moore Gallery—The gallery's inaugural exhibition brings together a motley group of artists who must have had trouble thinking up what to say to each other at the opening—yet there's some fine work. Debra Bermingham's gently focussed painting of a Victorian sideboard is slightly tilted, as though Grandma's parlor has been put out to sea, and dizzying. Jack Levine spoofs his own milieu with a claque of gray-haired art-world types, entitled "The Avant Garde." Yvonne Jacquette's glittering aerial view of a city at night with an airplane wing slicing through is a contemporary echo of Reginald Marsh's charming, dowdy Manhattan skyline with smoking tugboats passing by. Through Dec. 30. (724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Closed Dec. 26.)

Short List—**JAMES BARSNESS**, Adams, 50 W. 57th St. Closed Dec. 23 and Dec. 29-30; through Jan. 13. . . . **ST. CLAIR CEMIN**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Closed Dec. 23, Dec. 30, and Jan. 2; through Jan. 6. . . . **BRUCE HELANDER**, Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. Closed Dec. 26-30; through Jan. 20. . . . **LEE KRASNER**, McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Closes at 2 on Dec. 22 and Dec. 29; closed Dec. 23 and Dec. 30; through Jan. 27. . . . **JULES OLITSKY** and **HANS HOFMANN**, Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 6 and Jan. 20, respectively. . . . **ROBERT RYMAN** and **ANTONI TÀPIES**, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Closed Dec. 23, Dec. 30, and Jan. 2; through Jan. 13.



"Beyond Ars Medica," a show of pathological artifacts, at Thread Waxing Space.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Jo Baer—Sixties and early-seventies paintings by a second-string minimalist: accomplished, correct, and dourly elegant, but also rather boring—they lack the punch of contemporaneous work by Agnes Martin, Robert Mangold, and Brice Marden. Through Jan. 13. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Closed Dec. 26-30.)

Francesco Clemente—A selection of oil paintings and works on paper from the eighties, by the leading Italian exponent of neo-expressionism. The images are unfailingly lovely, regardless of their outré subject matter (polymorphous sexuality, decapitation, vomiting, etc.). Through Jan. 27. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. Closes at 4 on Dec. 23.)

Chuck Close—New large-scale color and grisaille portraits of the artist and his friends (Roy Lichtenstein and Dorothea Rockburne, among others). The images, composed of a multitude of blobby cells, teeter uneasily between recognizable likenesses and hideous distortions: strong, if by now rather familiar, work. Through Jan. 6. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St.)

Christian Schumann / Sylvie Fleury—Paintings in which a young artist deftly re-creates a plethora of comic-book, graffiti, and advertising styles. Some are brightly hued, after the manner of album-cover graphics; others are blanched, with the artist's innumerable little sketches drifting through beige planes like homeless Miró biomorphs. / Returning to an image used in a previous show, an artist giddily obsessed with the shifting currents of fashion has crafted three soft-sculpture rockets (each titled "First Spaceship on Venus") after the manner of Oldenburg—two in girlie-pink fabric, one in glittery gold lamé. Through Dec. 23. (Postmasters, 80 Greene St.)

Fred Wilson—"Collectibles," an installation of sculptures and photographs of figurines that caricature black stereotypes. Once commonplace, these ceramics have become sought-after kitsch objects (Andy Warhol cherished his large collection of mammy cookie jars). The antiracist gist of this show is all too obvious; more interesting is the way Wilson's strategies and styles parody, perhaps unwittingly, those of other Metro artists, such as Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, and Louise Lawler. Through Jan. 6. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. Closed Dec. 23 and Dec. 26-30.)

"Beyond Ars Medica"—A delicious show of anatomical artifacts, medical instruments, bones, and other pathological stuff from the Mütter Museum of Philadelphia's College of Physicians. Also on view are photographs of the collection by contemporary photographers, among them Shelby Lee Adams, Gwen Akin and Allan Ludwig, and Joel-Peter Witkin. Through Jan. 11. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. Closed Dec. 23 and Dec. 26-30.)

"A Child's World"—Paintings, sculptures, and photographs by Vincent Desiderio, Sally Mann, David Levinthal, Maxine Hayt, Susan Bee, and others. Through Jan. 13. (Arstark, 568 Broadway.)

"Silhouettes"—Color photograms from Adam Fuss, pinhole photographs from Christopher Bucklow, and drawings by Elliott Puckette. Through Jan. 6. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. Closed Dec. 26-30.)

Annina Nosei Gallery—Nosei has moved from SoHo to Chelsea and reopened with a group show of gallery artists, including Julio Galan, Stephen Mueller, Shirin Neshat, Jenny Watson, and Manuel Ocampo. Through Dec. 30. (530 W. 22nd St. Closed Tuesdays.)

Short List—**MARINA ABRAMOVIC**, Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. Closes at 2 on Dec. 23; closed Dec. 26-30; through Jan. 13. . . . **LUTZ BACHER**, Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Closed Tuesdays; through Jan. 28. . . . **MARY CORSE**, Ace, 275 Hudson St. Opens at 1; closed Dec. 23-30; through Jan. 27. . . . **TAMARA DE LEMPICKA**, Westwood, 578 Broadway. Through Jan. 13. . . . **GEORGE HERMS**, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Closed Dec. 23-30; through Jan. 27. . . . **BRICE MARDEN**, Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 6; through Jan. 14. . . . **MALCOLM MORLEY**, Klein, 40 Wooster St. Closed Dec. 23-30; through Jan. 6. . . . **TOM SACHS**, Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. Closed Tuesdays; through Jan. 14. . . . **MARTIN SILVERMAN** and **KEVIN WOLFF**, Feature, 76 Greene St. Closed Dec. 22-27 and Jan. 2; through Jan. 6.

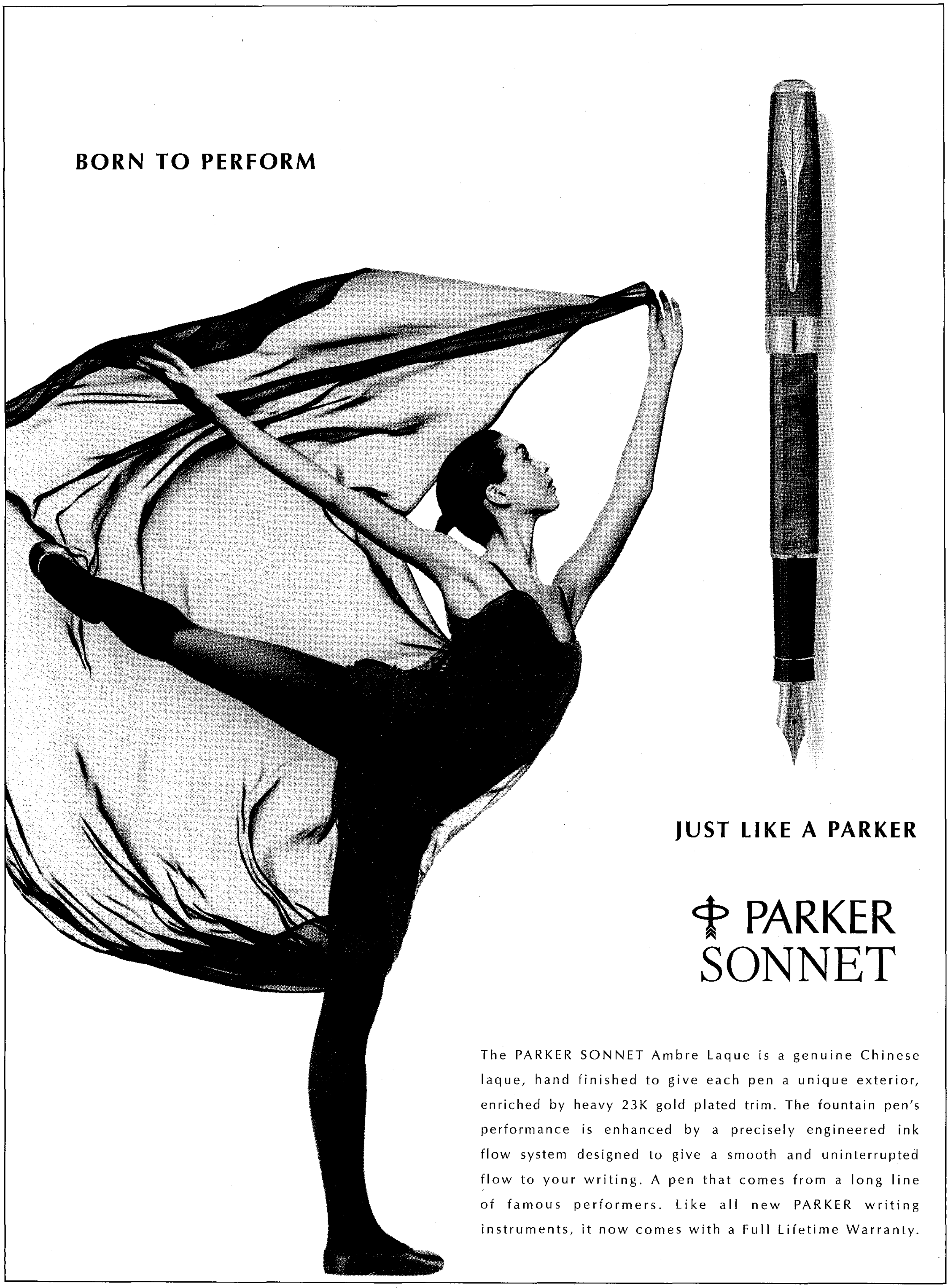
OTHER VENUES

"Serenissima: The Arts of Fashion in Venice"—A survey that covers the thirteenth century through the eighteenth, including dresses, suits, shoes, gloves, veils, masks, and textiles. Through Jan. 20. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays, except Christmas and New Year's Day; opens at noon on Saturdays.)

"Art, Design, and Barbie: The Evolution of a Cultural Icon"—The überdoll gets a valise's worth of makeovers here, from the likes of John Baldessari, Zaha Hadid, Kenny Scharf, Robert A. M. Stern, and Andy Warhol. Through Feb. 10. (Liberty Street Gallery, 225 Liberty St., at West St., Battery Park City. Opens Saturdays and Sundays at noon. For more information, call 945-0505.)

Grand Central Terminal—"Poetic Light," a forty-five-foot glass-enclosed installation, designed by architect Louise Braverman, in which blue, green, yellow, and amber Plexiglas panels display poems by Martin

SERGIO RUZZIER



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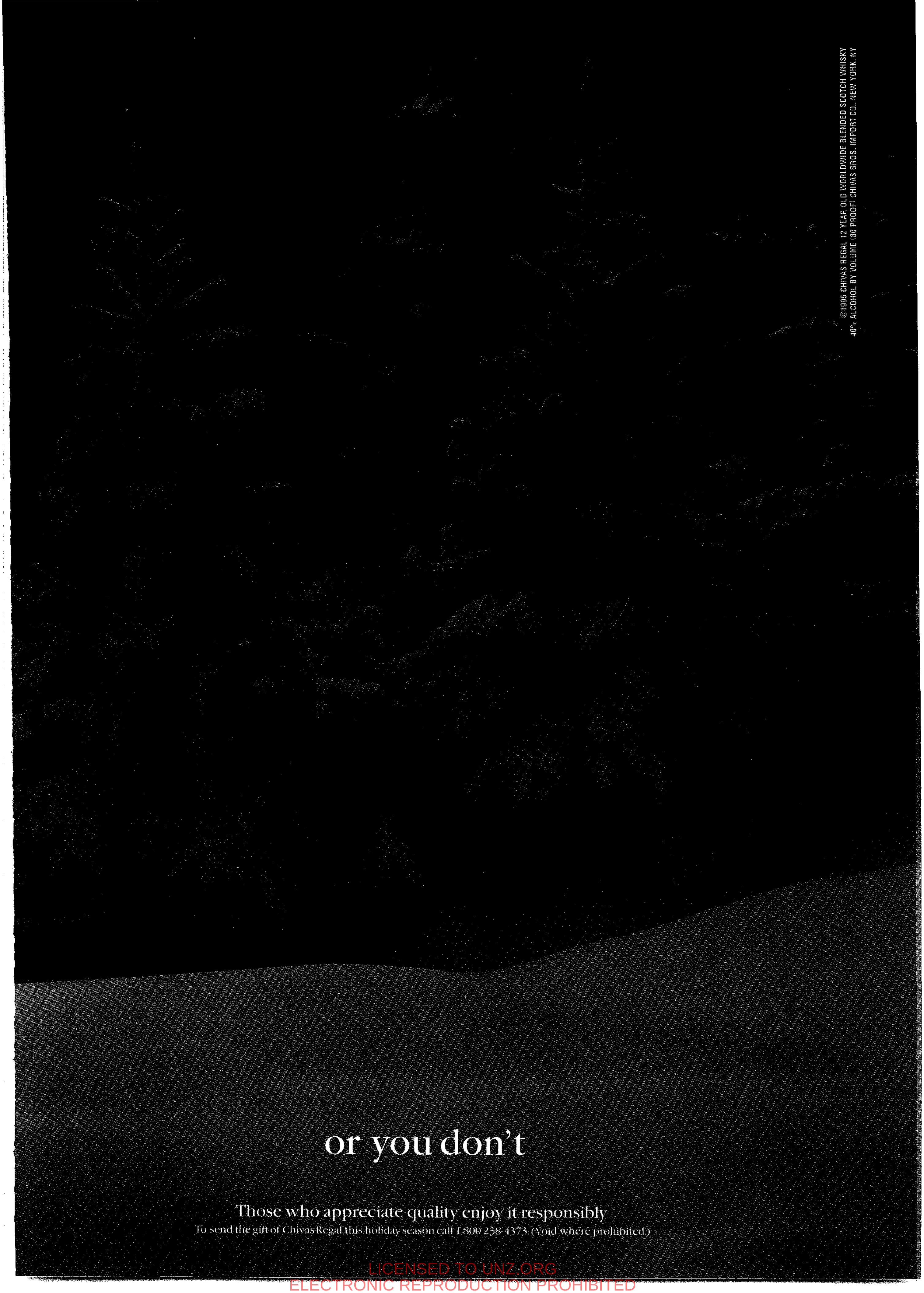

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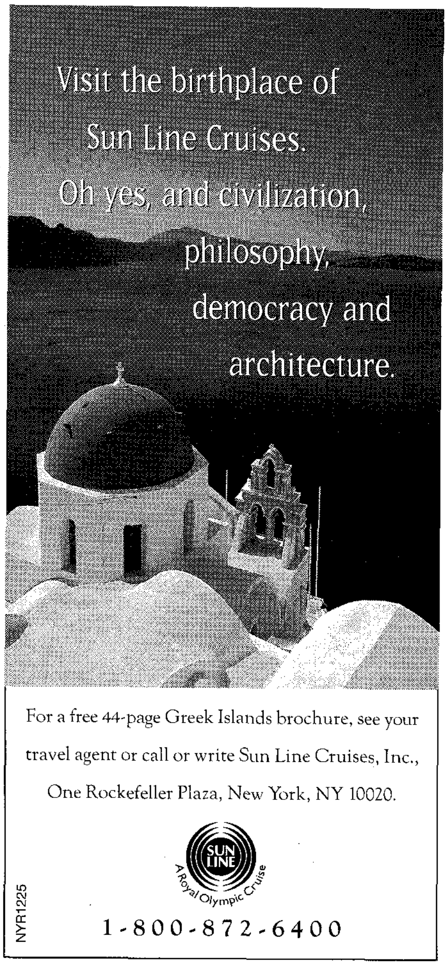
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Espada, June Jordan, Robert Pinsky, and Jane Reichhold. Through Jan. 1. (Main Concourse.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

JOHN COPLANS—"Self Portrait: Frieze," a series of oversized nude torsos (the artist, as always) in groups of two, three, and four, which runs in a loose band around the gallery walls. Through Jan. 13. (Rosen, 130 Prince St. Closed Dec. 26-Jan. 2.)

ANDREAS FEININGER—Urban and industrial landscapes, closeups of seashells and plants, and portraits, by the former *Life* photographer, who is eighty-nine this year. Through Jan. 6. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Closed Dec. 26-28.)

"THE HUNGARIAN CIRCLE: 1916-1940"—A two-gallery show of vintage photographs and collages by trailblazers (Kertész, Brassaï, Moholy-Nagy, Munkacsi, Capa) and more obscure artists (Pal Angelo, Imre Kinszki, Karoly Escher, Josef Pesci). Through Dec. 29. (Greenberg and Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Closed Dec. 26.)

"KISSING"—More than seventy photographs of wondrous osculation, by such artists as Julia Margaret Cameron, André Kertész, George Hurrell, Ernst Haas, Nan Goldin, Danny Lyon, and Weegee. Through Jan. 6. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. Opens at noon Dec. 26-30.)

"NEW YORK STORIES"—Less-familiar views of our metropolis, from the forties through the seventies, by Fritz Neugass, Fred Stein, Marvin Newman, David Attie, Simpson Kalisher, and Donald Blumberg. Through Jan. 13. (Danziger, 130 Prince St. Closed Dec. 26 and Jan. 2.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"Eve Arnold: In Retrospect," black-and-white and color images from the photojournalist's forty-year career: politicians, diplomats, movie stars, religious leaders, artists, and musicians. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Country Beside Itself," Lars Tunbjörk's colorful, idiosyncratic exploration of Sweden's changing commercial and leisure pursuits. Through Feb. 11. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and *Tuesday evenings until 8.)*

SHORT LIST—**CRAIG BARBER** and **MARSHALL,** Rice, 325 W. 11th St. Open Thursdays through Saturdays, 1 to 6, and Dec. 24, until 5; closed Dec. 28-30; through Jan. 7. . . . **RUDY BURCKHARDT,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Closed Dec. 23, Dec. 26-27, and Dec. 30; starts Dec. 20. . . . **KEITH CARTER,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Closed Dec. 26 and Jan. 2; through Jan. 20. . . . **RALSTON CRAWFORD** and **RON JUDE,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Closed Dec. 23; through Dec. 29. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE,** Wessel O'Connor, 60 Thomas St. Opens at noon; closed Dec. 26; through Jan. 20. . . . **ELLIOTT ERWITT,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through Jan. 6. . . . **OSAMU KANEMURA,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **MICHIKO KON,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Starts Dec. 21. . . . **EL LISSITZKY,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Closed Dec. 23 and Dec. 30; through Jan. 13. . . . **CONSTANTINE MANOS,** Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Jan. 17. . . . **STEPHEN SHORE,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Closed Dec. 23; through Jan. 6. . . . **GERALD SLOTA,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Closed Dec. 26-30 and Jan. 2; through Jan. 20.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the American Museum of Natural History.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Questions, Anyone?

Carlo Gozzi may not be a household name here, but he'd be even more obscure if opera composers hadn't taken a shine to his fairy-tale plays. The first of the Venetian author's ten *fiabe* (as he called them), "L'Amore delle Tre Melarance" (1761), took on new life as Prokofiev's "The Love for Three Oranges" (1921); another furnished the plot for Wagner's first opera, "Die Feen" (1834). But the operatic jackpot in Gozzi's output was his "Turandotte," a comedy about a Chinese princess who poses riddles to prospective suitors and beheads those who respond with wrong answers. The play proved especially popular among the German Romantics, and it gave rise to at least three operatic settings: Antonio Bazzini's "Turanda" (1867), Ferruccio Busoni's "Turandot" (1917), and, most spectacularly, the incomplete final opus (first produced, posthumously, in 1926) of Bazzini's star pupil, Giacomo Puccini. For three weeks, beginning December 29, La Mama E.T.C. offers an English-language staging of Gozzi's play which draws on the traditions of Beijing opera and commedia dell'arte and employs a new score by the Chinese composer Han Yong. It's a rare opportunity to go to the source of Puccini's much loved swan song. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Dec. 29-30 at 7 and Dec. 31 at 2:30. Through Jan. 14.)

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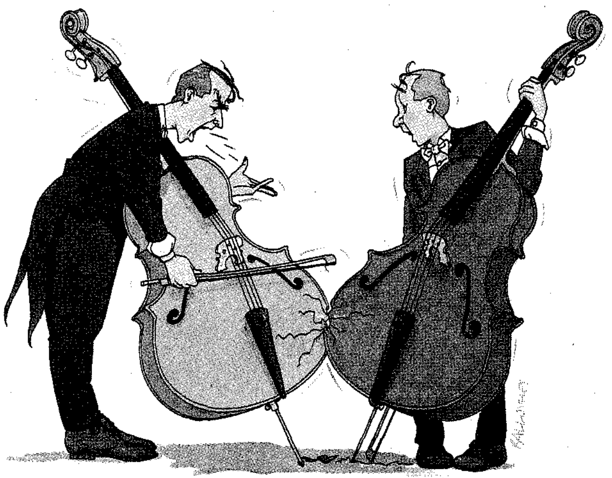
HOLIDAY MUSIC

AULOS ENSEMBLE—Concerts against the backdrop of the Christmas tree and the Neapolitan Baroque crèche in the Metropolitan Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall. Dec. 20 at 6:30 and 8:30: Soprano Julianne Baird and countertenor Drew Minter join the early-music instrumentalists in selections by Bach and Couperin. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 6:30 and 8:30: The Riverside Choir (directed by Tim Smith) shares a program that includes Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," Bach's motet "Singet dem Herrn," and chamber works by Johann Gottlieb Janitsch and J. C. Bach. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.)

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH"—Dec. 20 at 7:30: A son-et-lumière rendition—it had to happen sooner or later—with Bruce Fifer leading the combined choirs of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133.) . . . ¶ Dec. 21-22 at 8: Richard Westenburg directs the Musica Sacra Chorus and Orchestra, with soprano Jeanne Ommerlé, mezzo-soprano Christina Wilcox, tenor Jon Humphrey, and baritone Kevin McMillan. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.) . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 2:30 and 8: The St. Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra, directed by David Randolph, with soprano Joyce Guyer, mezzo-soprano Janice Meyerson, tenor Robert Guarino, and bass Kevin Deas. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)


PIERRE BALLOUHEY

Ensemble for Early Music—Performing medieval and Renaissance carols and instrumental dances. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 22-23 at 8. . . . **NOTE:** The program will be repeated Jan. 6-7.)

Ludwig-san Beethoven—In recent decades, Japan has gone increasingly gaga over Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as year-end fare. Amateurs singing in the *Daiku* ("Big Nine") work out helpful phonetic formulas to steer them through Schiller's text. (*"O Freude!"* becomes *"o-furo ide,"* which means "stepping out of the bathtub." Or so we're told.) This year, Japan brings its tradition to the Big Apple with a mammoth performance at Carnegie Hall, with Hideaki Mutoh leading a Japanese orchestra, American soloists, and—in the hall's tiers—the two hundred and fifty singers of Japan's Symphony No. 9 Society and another hundred and fifty American choristers. (Dec. 24 at 3. 247-7800.)

ARTEK—Gwendolyn Toth directs the ensemble's singers and period-instrument players in staged performances of Alessandro Stradella's Christmas Cantata and works by seventeenth-century German and Spanish composers; featuring the Zaravanda Baroque Dance Company, led by Alan Tjaarda Jones. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 29-30 at 8.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**DIE FLEDERMAUS,** with June Anderson, Janet Williams, Jochen Kowalski, Neil Rosenshein, Wolfgang Brendel, Russell Braun, and Dom DeLuise; conducted by Hermann Michael. (Dec. 20, Dec. 23, Dec. 26, and Dec. 29, all at 8.) . . . With Thomas Allen instead of Mr. Brendel, and with an assortment of stars making cameo appearances in the Act II party scene. (Dec. 31 at 7.) . . . **DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG,** with Karita Mattila, Birgitta Svendén, Ben Heppner, Lars Magnusson, Bernd Weikl, Hermann Prey, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; James Levine. (Dec. 21 at 6.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Diana Soviero, Marcello Giordani, and Dwayne Croft; Carlo Rizzi. (Dec. 22 at 8.) . . . With Barbara Frittoli, Patricia Racette, Mr. Giordani, and Mr. Croft; Mr. Rizzi. (Dec. 28 and Dec. 30 at 8.) . . . **DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE,** with Joan Rodgers, Larissa Rudakova, Deon van der Walt, Mark Oswald, and Hans Sotin; Peter Schneider. (Dec. 23 at 1:30.) . . . **THE QUEEN OF SPADES,** with Maria Guleghina, Ms. Svendén, Leonie Rysanek, Gegam Grigorian, Nikolai Putilin, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky; Valery Gergiev. (Dec. 27 and Jan. 2 at 8 and Dec. 30 at 1:30. . . . **NOTE:** The Jan. 2 performance will mark Ms. Rysanek's farewell to the American stage.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

Amato Opera Company—Dec. 22-23 and Dec. 29-30 at 7:30: Final performances of "Madama Butterfly." . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 11:30 A.M.: A family performance of Seymour Barab's "Little Red Riding Hood." . . . ¶ Dec. 30 at 11:30 A.M. and 2:30: Family performances of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," much truncated and in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 20-21 at 8 and Dec. 22 at 11 A.M.: Andrew Davis conducts Delius's "The Walk to the Paradise Garden," Vaughan Williams's Oboe Concerto (featuring Joseph Robinson, the orchestra's principal oboist) and "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," and selections from Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker." . . . ¶ Dec. 23 at 3 and 8: The Canadian Brass join members of the New York Philharmonic Brass for a holiday program that includes works by Gabrieli and Monteverdi, the première of Christopher Dedrick's "Entre Nous," and traditional carols arranged by Andrew Kazdin, Luther Henderson, and Stan Kenton. . . . ¶ Dec. 30 at 8: Leonard Slatkin leads the orchestra in a

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New Year's Eve eve concert that comprises Gershwin's "Cuban Overture," Rodgers' "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," and works by Howard Hanson, Leroy Anderson, and Johann Strauss, Jr. Soprano Julia Migenes rounds out the festivities with songs and arias by Lehár, Strauss, Jr., and American popular composers. (875-5030.)

"'BARGENBURG' CONCERTOS"—New York's floating concert hall presents its annual traversal of Bach's six "Brandenburg" Concertos. Dec. 21 and Dec. 24 at 7:30: The Concertos No. 1, No. 2, and No. 4. . . . ¶ Dec. 28 and Dec. 31 at 7:30: The Concertos No. 6, No. 5, and No. 3. (Bargemusic, Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. . . . NOTE: The New Year's Eve performance is a benefit concert.)

NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA—Every year during this season, an orchestra of the nation's most promising high-school and college musicians gathers to hone their skills at Carnegie Hall. Violinist and conductor Jaime Laredo leads the ensemble in a pair of concerts. Dec. 24 at 7: Mozart's G-Major Serenade (K. 525, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik"), concertos by Vivaldi (one for two trumpets, another for two oboes), and Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings. . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 8: Grieg's "Holberg Suite," Mozart's Symphony No. 40, and Beethoven's Triple Concerto (featuring the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio). (247-7800.)

P. D. Q. BACH—Professor Peter Schickele is to musical refinement what Dr. Charles Kevorkian is to life support, but we'd prefer to spend an evening with the professor. In these thirtieth-anniversary concerts, he'll bring his inimitable touch to the least ill-regarded works by P.D.Q. Bach ("the oddest of Johann Sebastian's twenty-odd children"), including his much loved classic "Iphigenia in Brooklyn," the canine cantata "Wachet Arf!," and the ballet score "The Preachers of Crimetheus." Conductor Kenneth Jean will try to keep order among the participants. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 27 and Dec. 29-30, all at 8.)

RECITALS

ON THE FIRST FLOOR—Weekly chamber concerts in the parlor of a bed-and-breakfast in New York City's nautical community. Dec. 24 at noon: Harpsichordist Ilan Rechtman and colleagues. . . . ¶ Dec. 31 at noon: Classical guitarist Antigoni Goni. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478.)

ON THE SECOND FLOOR—Sunday chamber-music soirées, one flight up. Dec. 24 at 6 and 8: Music by Bach, Brahms, and others. . . . ¶ Dec. 31 at 6 and 8: Violist Ori Kam and pianist Tatiana Goncharova. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. No tickets necessary.)

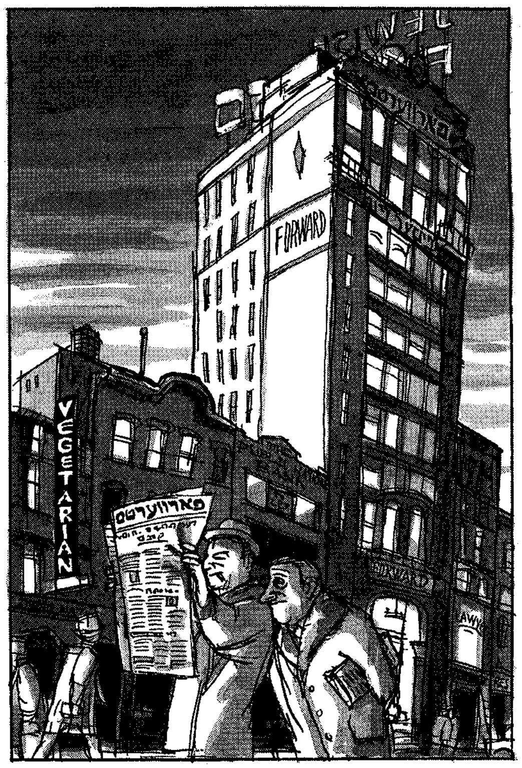
ON THE THIRD FLOOR—Monthly chamber concerts in a luthier's showroom, featuring members of the Bachanalia Festival Orchestra. This installment includes both of Schubert's quintets: the "Trout" and the C-Major String Quintet. (Landon Gallery, 1926 Broadway, at 64th St. Dec. 28 at 8. For information about tickets, call 239-5906.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

CHRISTMAS DAY TOUR—Big Onion Walking Tours pays its Christmas Day call on Jewish landmarks of the Lower East Side—the *Daily Forward* building, Shteebel Row (a tenement block converted into synagogues), the onetime site of the Hester Street pushcart market. The tour attracted such a crowd last year that the four beat policemen who tagged along stopped holiday traffic so that it could cross the streets. For more information, call 439-1090.

NEW YEAR'S DAY TOUR—Jan. 1 at 11 A.M.: Adventure on a Shoestring greets the New Year in Gramercy Park, with a stroll through the onetime marshland. For more information, call 265-2663.

STINT FROM ÉLOIZE—What do you do with a degree from the École Nationale de Cirque, in Montreal? Bicycle acts, juggling, tumbling, dancing on a ladder, handstands, handstands on top of somebody else doing handstands. The Montreal-based Cirque Éloize, made up primarily of honors graduates of the circus academy, gives the maiden performances on the grand stage of the newly renovated New Victory Theatre, the playhouse for children. (330 W. 42nd St. 384-4010. Through Dec. 31.)

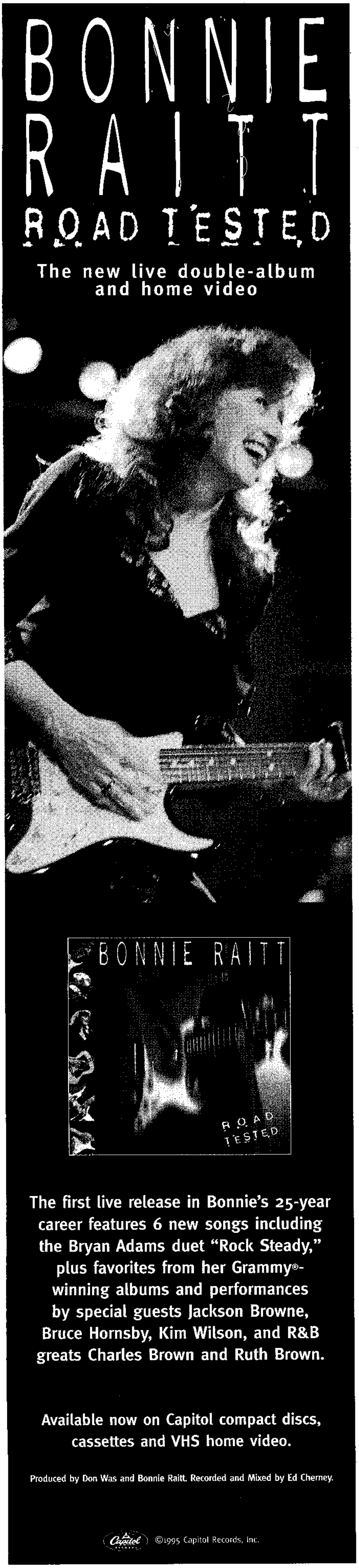


A Jewish Christmas on the Lower East Side, with Big Onion Walking Tours.

BEN KATCHOR

READINGS—Dec. 21 at 7:30: Graphic novelist Neil Gaiman, creator of the "Sandman" series, and cartoonist Gahan Wilson present their work. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ Dec. 27 at 9: Shut-Up Shelley hosts the open slam, where forty first-come, first-heard poets will compete for ten bucks and a potluck prize. Past pots have included TUMS, Amish-friendship-bread starter dough, and a Snickers minibar. (Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd St. 505-8183.) . . . ¶ Jan. 1, from 2 P.M. to 1 A.M.: The Poetry Project's annual New Year's Day marathon reading slots a hundred and twenty segments for spoken-word luminaries (Maggie Estep, Penny Arcade, Todd Colby, Ron Padgett, Eric Bogosian, et al.) and the occasional musician (last year, for instance, Patti Smith and Lenny Kaye reunited for "Ghost Dance" and "The People Have the Power"). (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

TALK—Dec. 19 at 6:30: Stan Schwartz, of the Cacti and Succulent Society, talks about coaxing blooms from Christmas cacti, which, unlike so many of us, respond well to short days and cool evenings. (Horticulture Society of New York, 128 W. 58th St. No tickets necessary.)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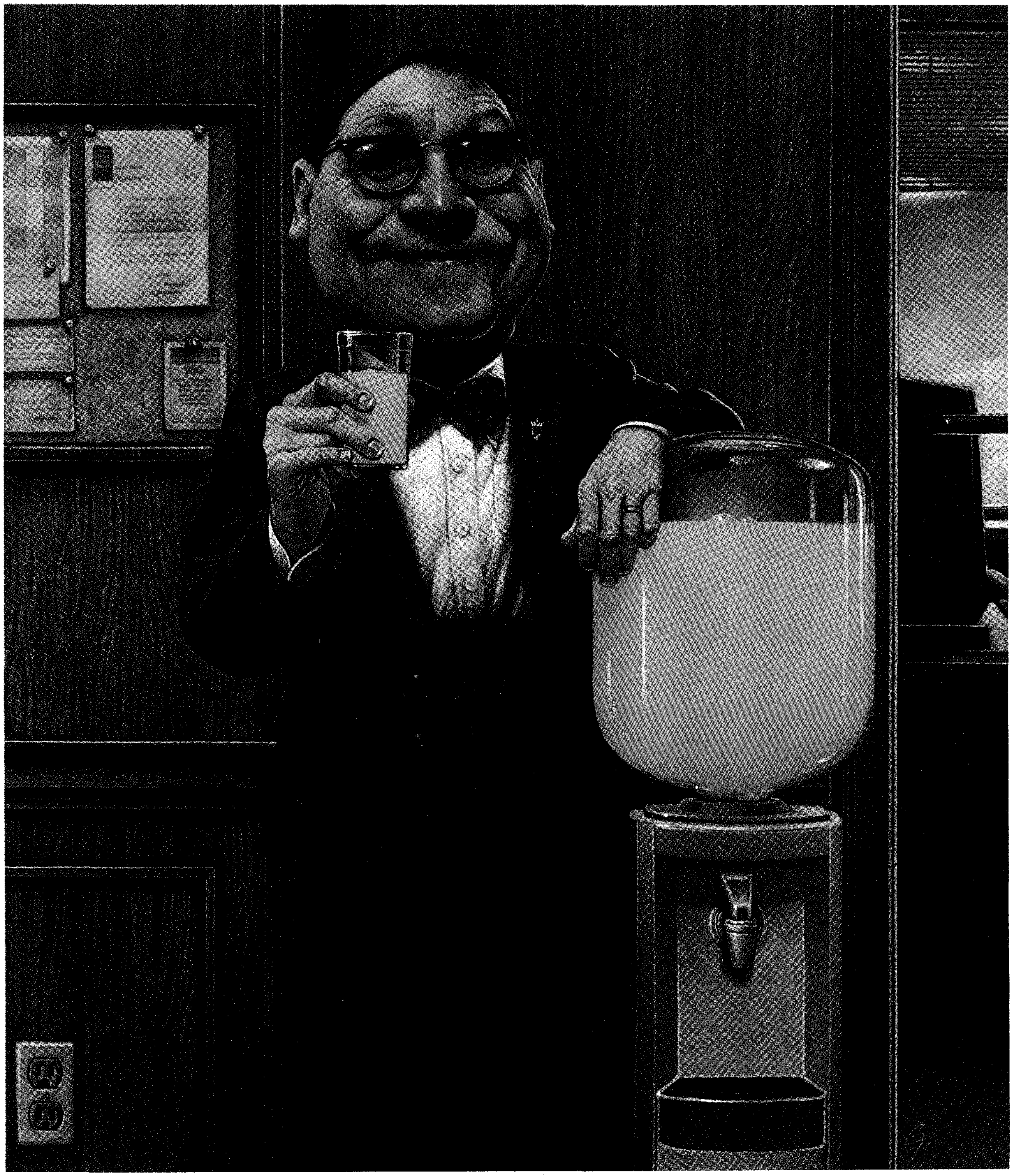

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING

Balto—An animated adventure about the sled dogs who delivered medicine to Alaskan children during a 1925 diphtheria epidemic. Opening December 22. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Cutthroat Island—Geena Davis plays a pirate's daughter in search of her late father's lost treasure, in an adventure directed by Renny Harlin. Opening December 22. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, and Criterion Center.)

Dead Man Walking—Susan Sarandon is a nun and Sean Penn the convicted murderer she tries to save, in a drama written and directed by Tim Robbins. Opening December 29. (Village Theatre VII and Lincoln Square.)

Dracula: Dead and Loving It—Leslie Nielsen as a vampire, in a new Mel Brooks comedy. Opening December 22. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 2.)

For God and Country—A drama about life in the Austrian Army during the Cold War, written and directed by Wolfgang Murnberger. In German. December 20-January 2. (Film Forum.)

Four Rooms—One movie from four writer-directors—Allison Anders, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, and Quentin Tarantino—whose individual segments share only a setting (a Los Angeles hotel on New Year's Eve) and an actor (Tim Roth as an overworked bellhop). Opening December 25. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 3.)

Grumpier Old Men—Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau reprise their roles as feuding codgers, in a sequel to their 1993 comedy, joined this time around by Sophia Loren. Directed by Howard Deutch. Opening December 22. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Criterion Center.)

Lamerica—A drama by Gianni Amelio, about an Italian con man in post-Communist Albania. With Enrico Lo Verso. In Italian. Opening December 20. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Nixon—Anthony Hopkins stars as the thirty-seventh President, in Oliver Stone's new film. Opening December 20. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema I, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Cinema 3rd Avenue; Dec. 20-24.)

Restoration—A young medical student (Robert Downey, Jr.) arrives at the court of King Charles II (Sam Neill), in a drama directed by Michael Hoffman. With David Thewlis, Meg Ryan, Ian McKellen, and Hugh Grant. Opening December 22. (68th St. Playhouse.)

Richard III—A version set in the twentieth century, directed by Richard Loncraine and starring Ian McKellen as Shakespeare's vicious monarch. Opening December 29.

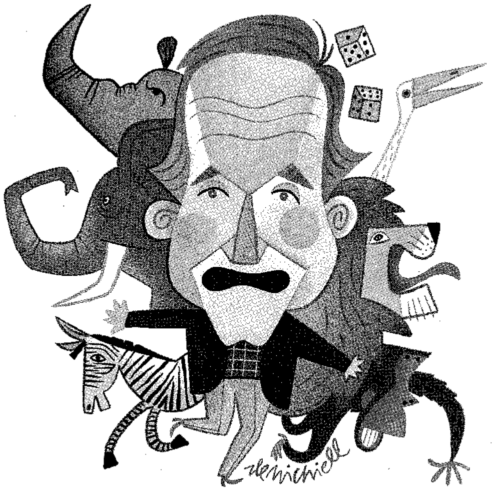
Shanghai Triad—Gong Li stars as a night-club singer, in Zhang Yimou's tale of Shanghai gangsters in the nineteen-thirties. In Mandarin. Opening December 21. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

A Short Film About Killing and A Short Film About Love—Two episodes from Krzyzstof Kieślowski's ten-part "Dekalog": a 1987 feature about a youth on trial for murdering a taxi-driver, and a 1988 drama about a teenage orphan and his sexually active next-door neighbor. In Polish. Opening December 20 and December 29, respectively. (Cinema Village.)

Sudden Death—A thriller directed by Peter Hyams, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme as a father who must save his children from terrorists. Opening December 22. (34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Tom and Huck—Jonathan Taylor Thomas and Brad Renfro, respectively, take the title roles in Peter Hewitt's adaptation of Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." Opening December 22. (Village East Cinemas, Sutton, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Embassy 4.)

12 Monkeys—In Terry Gilliam's thriller, set in the twenty-first century, Bruce Willis travels back in time in order to save humanity from a deadly virus. With Brad Pitt and Madeleine Stowe. Opening December 27. (Beekman.)



Robin Williams in "Jumanji."

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

Waiting to Exhale—Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, and Lela Rochon star in Forest Whitaker's adaptation of Terry McMillan's 1992 novel. Opening December 22. (Gotham Cinema, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, and Criterion Center.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 40.)

Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls—On paper, Jim Carrey's latest smash is just a bunch of strung-together set pieces that make the writing on last season's "Saturday Night Live" look hilarious. But like Jerry Lewis and, to a degree, Steve Martin, Carrey can make the idiotic seem inspired, and his manic mugging creates some big laughs.—B.D. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Manhattan Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

The American President—In Rob Reiner's romantic comedy, the Chief Executive (Michael Douglas) is a widower—a lonely guy in the

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White House. The script, by Aaron Sorkin, wastes no time setting him up with a nice girl (Annette Bening), who is lobbying him for tougher environmental laws. This dopey premise creates enough crises to keep the lovers from achieving their destined bliss until an hour and fifty minutes has passed; but if contrivance this monumental is what it takes to put over an "old-fashioned" romantic comedy these days, the genre is in big trouble. The picture benefits from hilarious bits by some of the supporting players—notably David Paymer, Richard Dreyfuss, and Michael J. Fox. It's a shame that the movie whose coattails these wonderful actors are attached to is such an empty suit.—T.R. (11/20/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th St. East, Baronet, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Carrington—The life and loves of the Bloomsbury painter Dora Carrington, as re-created by writer-director Christopher Hampton. She was an average artist with a first-class libido. Emma Thompson's Carrington looks mournful and besieged (as well she might), and Hampton allows the period detail and lazy pacing to muffle his natural Wildean gift for good lines. Jonathan Pryce (in a beard like a bramble hedge) rescues the movie as Lytton Strachey, who was Carrington's long-term love rather than short-order lover. Strachey's manner was all effeteness, but thanks to Pryce you sense the steeliness of purpose behind it. If only Hampton's movie could boast the same.—A.L. (11/27/95) (Quad Cinema and Angelika 57.)

Casino—Martin Scorsese's movie about Las Vegas in the seventies and early eighties clocks in at close to three hours, and the epic running time is absurdly disproportionate to the stature of the main characters: a mob-connected casino manager (Robert De Niro); his wife (Sharon Stone), a former hustler; and a vicious gangster (Joe Pesci). Scorsese certainly hasn't forgotten how to make a movie; what he appears to have forgotten is why.—T.R. (12/4/95) (34th Street Showplace, Beekman, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, Lincoln Square, and Olympia.)

The City of Lost Children—A dark fantasy written and directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro ("Delicatessen"), in which a mad scientist (Daniel Emilfork) kidnaps children in order to steal their dreams. With Ron Perlman. In French. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Cry, the Beloved Country—James Earl Jones and Richard Harris star in Ronald Harwood's adaptation of Alan Paton's 1948 novel, which centers on two bereaved fathers, one black and one white, in South Africa. Darrell James Roodt is the director. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . ¶ Village East Cinemas and Eastside Playhouse; starting Dec. 20.)

Father of the Bride Part II—It's possible to imagine updating the angry, fragile father that Spencer Tracy played in "Father's Little Dividend" (1951) with some poignance when we keep hearing about the trials of middle-aged white men in the nineteen-nineties. But this remake, in which Dad (Steve Martin) struggles to deal with the simultaneous pregnancies of Mom (Diane Keaton) and their happily married daughter (Kimberly Williams), is a bizarrely opulent yuppie consumption fantasy. Aside from Keaton, who is warm and subtly hilarious, the most compelling players are table settings, floral arrangements, and Dad's sleek black convertible. With Martin Short as a fey party consultant—a slapstick Martha Stewart. Written by Nancy Meyers and Charles Shyer; directed by Shyer.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

Georgia—The definition of "downer." Mare Winningham and Jennifer Jason Leigh star as a pair of sisters; one sings, the other doesn't, although both try to make a living from their voices. The two women start out as opposites and never really shift their ground. On the sidelines stand their respective husbands, Ted Levine and the touching Max Perlich, trying not to get drawn into the grouchy mood. Leigh displays her habitual skills but no longer seems to take any pleasure in them—her banshee wail turns every song into mild torture. The film has plenty of integrity and gallons of rain; it was directed by Ulu Grosbard, whose previous movies, such as "Straight Time," have hardly been bundles of fun, either.—A.L. (12/11/95) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Get Shorty—John Travolta plays Chili Palmer, a small-time Miami loan shark who winds up in Hollywood, where he discovers his true métier and fulfills his destiny: he becomes a movie producer. Scott Frank's screenplay is based on an Elmore Leonard novel. The director, Barry Sonnenfeld, doesn't have the dexterity to trap the story's tiny, quick ironies; he works too strenuously for laughs. But Travolta's no-sweat acting—which deftly captures the dry comic tone of Leonard's prose—keeps the movie watchable. Also with Rene Russo, Gene Hackman, Danny DeVito, Delroy Lindo, and Dennis Farina.—T.R. (10/23/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

GoldenEye—Pierce Brosnan assumes the mantle of 007; Bond's boss, M (Judi Dench), accuses him of being a sexist dinosaur, while his latest love, Natalya (Izabella Scorupco), has to stroll along in a white bikini under a vulgar sunset. (Although much of the action unfolds among grubby Mafia types in post-Soviet St. Petersburg, Martin Campbell, the director, can't resist Caribbean hideaways.) Jeffrey Caine and Bruce Feirstein's script promises more fun than it delivers. Brosnan will never recapture the amused cool of the young Sean Connery, but he does overcome the handicap of looking like a humorless male model.—A.L. (11/27/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Heat—Al Pacino and Robert De Niro play cop and robber, respectively, in a thriller set in Los Angeles. Written and directed by Michael Mann. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

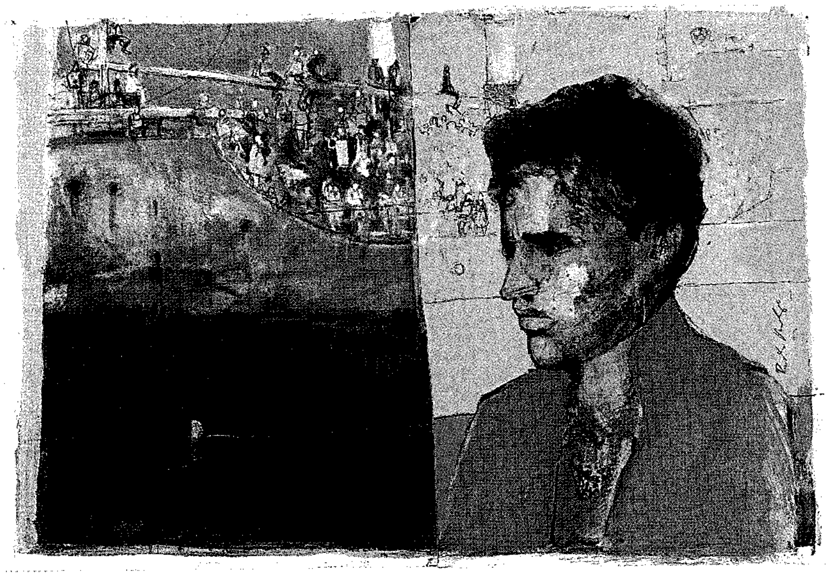
Jumanji—A fantasy about a board game that holds its players captive, starring Robin Williams. Directed by Joe Johnston. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Leaving Las Vegas—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments; the sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kind-hearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village East Cinemas, Plaza, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Mighty Aphrodite—Woody Allen stars in his latest picture as Lenny, a New York sportswriter bored by his wife (Helena Bonham Carter) and attracted to a hooker (Mira Sorvino) who happens to be the mother—though she doesn't know it—of his adopted son. The movie treads enjoyably over old ground, though rather than cruising along with the ease of Allen's best work it tends to hobble, and it closes in a flurry of undecided endings. Sorvino's comic momentum rescues it. She offers the alarming prospect of sexual comedy without neurosis; you don't see *that* too often in a Woody Allen film.—A.L. (10/30/95) (Art Greenwich Twin, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Money Train—Another "Lethal Weapon"-type buddy picture, filled with competitive energy and smart-ass retorts. This one stars Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson, and the director, Joseph Ruben, has polished it to a high gloss. Ruben spends more time on token character development than this fluff requires, but when the movie gets to the sensational robbing of an armored New York City subway train, the audience may feel that it's a token well spent.—B.D. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

Othello—Oliver Parker's version of Shakespeare's tragedy has the distinction of being the first filmed "Othello" in which the Moor of Venice is played by a black actor (Laurence Fishburne). Unfortunately, Parker's screenplay, following the familiar-quotations principle of Shakespearean adaptation, reduces the dramatic poem to a tattered collection of one-liners, and the hero's role suffers the most. By sacrificing the volcanic flow of language that conveys Othello's pride, confusion, and anguish, the movie leaves Fishburne stranded: his performance is tentative, mysteriously uncharismatic. Kenneth Branagh, who plays Iago, has a surer grasp of Shakespearean technique than anyone else in the cast, and his bold, confident interpretation manages to cut through the muddle that Parker has made of the play. Who steals this picture, though, steals trash. Also with Irene Jacob (as Desdemona), Nathaniel Parker, and Anna Patrick.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Paris.)


Enrico Lo Verso in "Lamerica."

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Sabrina—Sydney Pollack directs Harrison Ford and Julia Ormond in a remake of Billy Wilder's 1954 romantic comedy. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Tower East, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Astor Plaza.)

Sense and Sensibility—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and gives a restrained, appealing performance: she carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) The picture is determinedly minor, but, slowly and surely, it persuades us to settle for the small delights of engaging storytelling, warm humor, pretty scenery, and pretty people. If it pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Coronet, and Lincoln Square.)

Toy Story—A team effort by the computer-animation company Pixar and Disney. The easy-to-follow screenplay, about the rivalry between two toys—cowboy Woody and spaceman Buzz Lightyear—should excite young children; teen-agers and parents can enjoy the brilliantly executed action sequences. The filmmakers have gotten around the coldness of so much computer animation by using the warm and friendly voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen. Yes, it's a come-on for Disney products, but all their children's films are about marketing; at least this one—unlike "Pocahontas"—has some zip.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema II, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

When Night Is Falling—Writer-director Patricia Rozema's drama centers on a college professor (Pascale Bussières) forced to choose between her boyfriend (Henry Czerny) and the circus performer (Rachael Crawford) she has fallen in love with. (Angelika Film Center.)

White Man's Burden—The America we see here is ruled by a classy black élite, with a despairing white underclass way down below. Desmond Nakano wrote and directed this clever, speedy little thriller; some of his jokes—the all-black TV shows, the black doll craved by a white child—are sly and sharp, but the main plot could have come from anywhere, since it's obviously based more on class than on color: the poor, unemployed nobody (John Travolta) seeks revenge on the wealthy citizen (Harry Belafonte), only to find his plans spinning out of control. The two men make peace, yet they know that a happy ending is out of the question, and the unhappiness, when it comes, is like a blow to the heart. The brush of dramatic styles—Travolta's short fuse versus Belafonte's poise—is cool and convincing, and there's no mistaking Nakano's ambitions. If only they had stretched a little further.—A.L. (12/11/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

ALSO PLAYING

APOLLO 13 (reviewed in our issue of 7/10/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BABE** (9/4/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BLUE IN THE FACE** (10/23/95): Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE BROTHERS MC MULLEN:** Art Greenwich Twin. . . . **CLUELESS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE CONVENT:** Quad Cinema. . . .

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COPYCAT (11/13/95): Manhattan Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Criterion Center. . . . **THE CROSSING GUARD:** Angelika Film Center and Gotham Cinema. . . . **HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS** (11/13/95): 59th Street East Cinema, Metro Cinema, and Embassy 2. . . . **THE KINGDOM:** Film Forum. . . . **A MONTH BY THE LAKE:** Cinema 3. . . . **MORTAL KOMBAT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MURIEL'S WEDDING:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **PERSUASION** (9/25/95): Quad Cinema. . . . **PIGALLE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **POWDER:** Embassy 3. . . . **SMOKE:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THREE WISHES:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **UNDER SIEGE 2: DARK TERRITORY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE USUAL SUSPECTS** (8/14/95): 68th St. Playhouse and Quad Cinema. . . . **WILD BILL** (12/4/95): Village East Cinemas, Regency, and Embassy 4.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Plaza, 42 E. 58th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Baronet and Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini 1 and 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
Tower East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Before the Revolution (1964)—A sweepingly romantic movie about a young man's rebellion against bourgeois life and his disillusion with Communism, set in Parma and written and directed by Bernardo Bertolucci at the astonishing age of twenty-two. He captures what has rarely been seen on the screen—the extravagance and poetry of youthful ardor. The hero, Fabrizio, discovers that he is not single-minded enough to be a revolutionary, that he is too deeply involved in the beauty of life as it is *before* the revolution. (The characters of Fabrizio and his young aunt Gina are loosely derived from Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma.") In Italian.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Dec. 22-24 and Dec. 26.)

The Fringe Dwellers (1986)—At the beginning, Bruce Beresford's camera charts the all-white suburban strip and town square of Murgon, Queensland, then moves to the riverside shacks where the aborigines live. It's a shame that Beresford lays out the story, too, like a surveyor, pinning his characters to their landscape and social destiny. The heroine is an aborigine schoolgirl with the heavy-handed name of Trilby Comeaway (Kristina Nehm), who instigates her family's move from Aboriginetown to a housing development. Naturalistic soap opera ensues, including Trilby's unwanted pregnancy and her father's gambling away the rent money. The movie's fleeting glories come from its cast of aborigine actors, who seem to have a protective cushion of transcendent feeling. But not even their performances can put enough passion into this almanac of racial and class woes. Beresford and his then-wife, Rhoisin Beresford, adapted Nene Gare's novel.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 31.)

It's a Wonderful World (1939)—In the role of a tough-minded, devil-may-care poet, Claudette Colbert is forced to strain for laughs; the gag-filled script, by Ben Hecht and Herman J. Mankiewicz, involves her with crooks, cops, amateur actors, and Boy Scouts, and requires her to knock a man out. James Stewart plays opposite her as a detective. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. It's fast-paced but far from memorable.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 27-28.)

Midnight (1939)—Rapturous fun. Slim-hipped, wide-eyed Claudette Colbert, stranded in Paris in an evening gown, gets involved with rich, aristocratic John Barrymore, who is trying to regain the affections of his straying wife, Mary Astor, who is hooked on dapper gigolo Francis Lederer. This romantic comedy, directed by Mitchell Leisen for Paramount, from a script by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder, is one of the authentic delights of the thirties. Don Ameche has an important role; he isn't bad—for Ameche.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 26.)

Murder, He Says (1945)—In the same native cornball-surreal black-comedy mode as "Arsenic and Old Lace" but much looser, sillier, funnier. Fred MacMurray is the insurance agent who stumbles into the house of a family of homicidal hillbillies; Marjorie Main is the yowling, whipcracking mother. Her cooking features a poison that glows in the dark, and in the climactic sequence the assembled characters keep turning off the lights and spinning the lazy-Susan table to avoid the poison. (There has probably never been anything like this sequence in other farces; it's a classic of slapstick craziness.) The work of the director, George Marshall, is square at times; it isn't up to the madness and invention of Lou Breslow's screenplay.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 20.)

Partner (1968)—Two years before "The Conformist," Bernardo Bertolucci made this inventive but bewildering political vaudeville—a modernization of Dostoyevski's "The Double," in which a young drama teacher (Pierre Clémenti) has fantasies of extending the theatre of cruelty into political revolution. Visually extraordinary, but the meaning appears to get lost in the vivid pop color, the daring tricks of style, and the profusion of great images—in one scene books are piled up in heaps on the floor of a room, like the Roman ruins outside. (It's the most Godardian of Bertolucci's films.)—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Dec. 24 and Dec. 26-28.)

The Secret Garden (1949)—Margaret O'Brien brings a marvellous bristling spikiness to the role of Mary Lennox, the bratty orphan who moves from her late parents' home in India to the mysterious English manor of her uncle. It's hard to imagine another young actress putting as much zest into saying "I hate you" or as much elbow grease into a crockery-tossing fit. Dean Stockwell plays her wheelchair-bound cousin, Colin, and Brian Roper is Dickon, the nature-loving boy who introduces them to the recuperative power of the manor's secret garden. Robert Ardrey's adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's children's classic emphasizes psychological realism over magic, but its straightforward manner and dense atmosphere link up with the novel's post-Victorian strength and sensibility. Fred M. Wilcox directed; Clarence Brown produced; the adult performers include Herbert Marshall, Gladys Cooper, Elsa Lanchester, and Reginald Owen.—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Dec. 28-31.)

Unfaithfully Yours (1948)—One of the most sophisticated slapstick comedies ever made, this classic, written and directed by Preston Sturges, got terrible reviews and failed at the box office. The hero, a symphony conductor (a parody of Sir Thomas Beecham), is played by Rex Harrison, who is at one of his comic peaks. During a concert the conductor, convinced that his wife (Linda Darnell) has been unfaithful to him, fantasizes how he will handle the situation in three different ways, according to the styles of the music on the program. After the concert, he tries to carry them out, scrambling them hopelessly. There are so many great lines and situations in this movie that writers and directors have been stealing from it for years.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 22-23.)

What Happened to Kerouac? (1985)—This rough-and-ready documentary combines unbuttoned interviews with Jack Kerouac's friends and colleagues, evocative pictures of San Francisco, New York, and Lowell, Massachusetts, and Kerouac's own soft-spoken yet electric readings of his work. The co-directors, Richard Lerner and Lewis MacAdams, give us the American individualist who discovered his identity through male friendships; the believer in motion and experience who reached a point where body and sensation melted into soul; the grassroots wordsmith who found his voice when he gave himself over to instinctual, non-stop observation and spieling—often in the company of Neal Cassady (a delinquent of genius), Allen Ginsberg, or William Burroughs. The filmmakers don't answer their own title's question. But they do provide a portrait that is in equal parts hard-edged and shimmering, and thus true to the elusive nature of this tormented, exuberant literary hero, who, like one of *his* heroes, Walt Whitman, contained multitudes.—M.S. (Whitney Museum; Dec. 20-22.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Screwball comedies from the thirties and forties. Dec. 20: "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1944, Frank Capra) and "Murder, He Says" (†). . . . Dec. 21: "Red Salute" (1935, Sidney Lanfield), "Public Deb No. 1" (1940, Gregory Ratoff), and "He Stayed for Breakfast" (1940, Alexander Hall). . . . Dec. 22-23: "To Be or Not to Be" (1942, Ernst Lubitsch) and "Unfaithfully Yours" (†). . . . Dec. 24-25: "Easy Liv-

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ing” (1937, Mitchell Leisen) and “Remember the Night” (1940, Leisen). . . . Dec. 26: “Bluebeard's Eighth Wife” (1938, Lubitsch) and “Midnight” (†). . . . Dec. 27-28: “The Miracle of Morgan's Creek” (1944, Preston Sturges) and “It's a Wonderful World” (†). . . . ¶ Films directed by Paul Morrissey. Dec. 29-Jan. 1: “Flesh for Frankenstein” (1973, in 3-D). . . . From Jan. 2: “Madame Wang's” (1981).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films from Australia. Dec. 21 at 2:30: “The Singer and the Dancer” (1977, Gillian Armstrong) and “Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy” (1990, Tracey Moffatt). . . . Dec. 21 at 6 and Dec. 22 at 2:30: “A Test of Love” (1984, Gil Brealey). . . . Dec. 21 at 8 and Dec. 24 at 2: “The Last of the Knucklemen” (1979, Tim Burstall). . . . Dec. 22 at 6 and Dec. 23 at 5: “Dad and Dave Come to Town” (1938, Ken G. Hall). . . . Dec. 22 at 8: “Lonely Hearts” (1982, Paul Cox). . . . Dec. 23 at 2:30: “On Our Selection” (1932, Hall). . . . Dec. 26 at 2:30 and Dec. 28 at 6: “The Kid Stakes” (1927, Tal Ordell; silent). . . . Dec. 26 at 6 and Dec. 30 at 2: “Orphan of the Wilderness” (1936, Hall). . . . Dec. 29 at 2:30: “The Getting of Wisdom” (1977, Bruce Beresford). . . . Dec. 29 at 6 and Jan. 1 at 5: “Winter of Our Dreams” (1981, John Duigan). . . . Dec. 29 at 8 and Dec. 30 at 5: “Picnic at Hanging Rock” (1975, Peter Weir). . . . Dec. 31 at 2: “The Fringe Dwellers” (†). . . . Jan. 1 at 1: “Backroads” (1977, Phillip Noyce). . . . Jan. 1 at 2:30 and Jan. 2 at 6: “Strictly Ballroom” (1993, Baz Luhrmann). . . . Jan. 2 at 2:30: “Only the Brave” (1994, Ana Kokkinos) and “Eternity” (1994, Lawrence Johnston). . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 3 and 6: “Good Time Sunday” (1992, Gary Keys). . . . ¶ Recent films from Germany. Dec. 22 at 3: “Heaven and Hell” (Hans-Christian Schmid; in German). . . . Dec. 22 at 6: “The Burning Snail” (Thomas Stiller; in German). . . . Dec. 22 at 8: “My Dear Husband” (Eva Maria Bahlrühs; in German). . . . Dec. 23 at 2 and Dec. 29 at 8: “Ludwig 1881” (Fosco and Donatello Dubini; in German). . . . Dec. 23 at 5 and Dec. 26 at 3: “The Jewess and the Captain” (Ulf von Mechow) and “The Eye of the Third Reich—Walter Frentz” (Jürgen Stumpfhaus). . . . Dec. 24 at 1: “Orson Welles—One Man Band” (Vassili Slovic and Oja Kodar). . . . Dec. 26 at 6 and Dec. 30 at 5: “The Deathmaker” (Romuald Karmaker; in German). . . . Dec. 28 at 3 and 6: “Niki de Saint Phalle: Who Is the Monster—You or Me?” (Peter Schamoni; in English and French). . . . Dec. 29 at 3: “Kiss Me!” (Maris Pfeiffer; in German). . . . Dec. 29 at 6 and Dec. 30 at 2:30: “Talk of the Town” (Rainer Kaufmann; in German). . . . Dec. 31 at 2: “Bruckner's Choice” (Jan Schmidt-Garre; in German). . . . Jan. 1 at 2:30: “To Live Now—Jews in Berlin” (Helma Sanders-Brahms; in German). . . . Jan. 1 at 6: “The Break” (Lars Becker; in German). . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 2:30, 5, and 7:30: “The First Screening” (1895, Auguste and Louis Lumière; silent) and “Kinetoscope Films” (1895, William Kennedy and Laurie Dickson).

At the Walter Reade Theatre, films by Bernardo Bertolucci.

ANDREA VENTURA

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Dec. 20 at 2, 4, 6:15 and 8:15 and Dec. 21 at 2 and 4: New films from Spain; all in Spanish, with English subtitles. . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 6:30: “Man with a Plan” (1995, John O'Brien). . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 9: “Dream of Light” (1992, Victor Erice). . . . ¶ Films by Bernardo Bertolucci. Dec. 22 at 2:30 and 6:45, Dec. 23 at 4 and 8:15, Dec. 24 at 6:30, and Dec. 26 at 4:15: “The Grim Reaper” (1962; in Italian). . . . Dec. 22 at 4:30 and 8:45, Dec. 23 at 6, Dec. 24 at 8:30, and Dec. 26 at 2 and 6:15: “Before the Revolution” (†). . . . Dec. 24 at 4, Dec. 26 at 8:30, Dec. 27 at 2 and 7:15, and Dec. 28 at 5:15 and 10:15: “Partner” (†). . . . Dec. 27 at 4:30 and 9:30, Dec. 28 at 2 and 7:30, and Dec. 29 at 4:15 and 9:15: “The Spider's Stratagem” (1970). . . . Dec. 29 at 2 and 7, Dec. 30 at 4 and 8:45, Dec. 31 at 4 and 6:15, Jan. 1 at 2, and Jan. 2 at 4:15: “The Conformist” (1969; in Italian). . . . Dec. 30 at 6:15, Dec. 31 at 8:30, Jan. 1 at 4:15, 6:30, and 8:45, and Jan. 2 at 2: “Last Tango in Paris” (1973). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Dec. 23-24 and Dec. 30-31 at 2: “The Wizard of Oz” (1939, Victor Fleming).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films starring Margaret O'Brien. Dec. 23-24 at 1: “Journey for Margaret” (1942, W. S. Van Dyke II). . . . Dec. 23-24 at 3: “Our Vines Have Tender Grapes” (1945, Roy Rowland). . . . Dec. 26-27 at 1:30 and 3:30 and Dec. 30-31 at 1: “Meet Me in St. Louis” (1944, Vincente Minnelli). . . . Dec. 28-29 at 1:30 and 3:30 and Dec. 30-31 at 3: “The Secret Garden” (†).

WHITNEY MUSEUM, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—“Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-65.” Dec. 20 at 1:30, Dec. 21 at 2:30, and Dec. 22 at 1:30: “What Happened to Kerouac?” (†). . . . Dec. 23-24 and Dec. 27 at 1:30: “The Connection” (1961, Shirley Clarke). . . . Dec. 28 at 2:30 and Dec. 29-30 at 1:30: “Shadows” (1961, John Cassavetes). . . . Dec. 31 at 1:30: “A Moveable Feast: Profiles of Contemporary American Authors—Allen Ginsberg” (1991, Bruce Berger) and “The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg” (1993, Jerry Aronson). . . . ¶ Films by Robert Frank. Dec. 20 at 4 and Dec. 21 at 6:15: “Conversations in Vermont” (1969), “Liferaft Earth” (1969), and “About Me: A Musical” (1971). . . . Dec. 22-23 at 4: “Cocksucker Blues” (1972). . . . Dec. 27 at 4, Dec. 28 at 6:30, and Dec. 29-30 at 4: “Home Is Where the Heart Is” (1971, Danny Seymour) and “Keep Busy” (1975, Rudy Wurlitzer and Frank).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Dec. 22 at 8: “Une Femme Douce” (1969, Robert Bresson; in French). . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 9:30: “Song 15-22” (1966, Stan Brakhage). . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 8: Ten short films by Joseph Cornell. . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 8: “Diamonds in the Night” (1964, Jan Nemec). . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at 7: Short films by Louis and Auguste Lumière. . . . ¶ Films by Carl Dreyer. Dec. 29 at 9: “The Parson's Widow” (1921; silent). . . . Dec. 30 at 6: “Michael” (1924; silent). . . . Dec. 30 at 8: “The Passion of Joan of Arc” (1928).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Jan. 14: “Harvest” (1953), with James Dean.

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Chopin: Polonaise in c minor, Op.40, No.2
Nocturne in c minor, Op.48, No.1
Nocturne in E major, Op.62, No. 2
Rachmaninoff: Piano Sonata No.2, Op. 36

Sunday, January 28 at 3:00

Ravel: Valses nobles et sentimentales
Chopin: Piano Sonata No.2 in b-flat minor, Op.35
Four Scherzi

Tickets for each performance: $50/35/25

SAMUEL RAMEY, bass
ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
JULIUS RUDEL, conductor

Wednesday, February 7 at 8:00

A Date with the Devil

Selections from –
Berlioz: La damnation de Faust
Meyerbeer: Robert le diable
Gounod: Faust
Boito: Mefistofele
Offenbach: Les contes d'Hoffmann
Stravinsky: The Rake's Progress

Tickets: $40/30/20

A Valentine's Day Presentation!

BRANDENBURG ENSEMBLE
Jean-Pierre Rampal, flute
Jennifer Koh, violin
Todd Phillips, leader

Wednesday, February 14 at 8:00

Mozart: Serenade in D, K.239 ("Serenata notturna")
Vivaldi: Concerto in c for flute, violin, and strings
Stamitz: Flute Concerto in G
Bach: Violin Concerto No.2 in E, BWV 1042
Brandenburg Concerto No.3 in G

Tickets: $35/25/20

ANNE SOPHIE MUTTER, violin
LAMBERT ORKIS, piano

Sunday, February 25 at 3:00

Brahms: Scherzo for Violin and Piano in c from FAE Sonata
Debussy: Sonata for Violin and Piano in g
Bartók: Sonata for Violin and Piano No.2
Wienawski: Legend in g, Op.17
Sarasate: Bohemien Airs from Zigeunerweisen

Tickets: $40/30/20

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, conductor
Joan Rodgers, soprano

Sunday, March 24 at 3:00

Bartók: Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta
Mahler: Symphony No. 4 in G

Pre-concert lecture, "Mahler's Obsession with Des Kraben Wunderhorn," by Steven Cerf at the Kaplan Penthouse at 2:00

Monday, March 25 at 7:30

All-Stravinsky program:
Symphonies of Wind Instruments
Symphony in C
Symphony of Psalms
Symphony in Three Movements

Pre-concert lecture, "Stravinsky and the Symphony," by Harlow Robinson at the Kaplan Penthouse at 6:30

Tickets for each performance: $45/35/20

MAXIM VENGEROV, violin

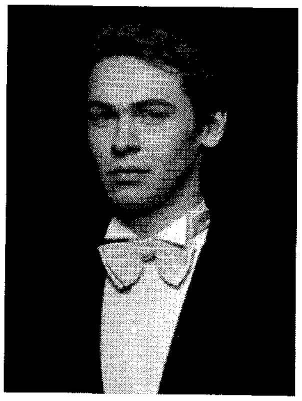
Sunday, April 21 at 3:00

Tickets: $35/25/15

KRYSTIAN ZIMERMAN, piano

Friday, April 26 at 8:00

Tickets: $40/30/20

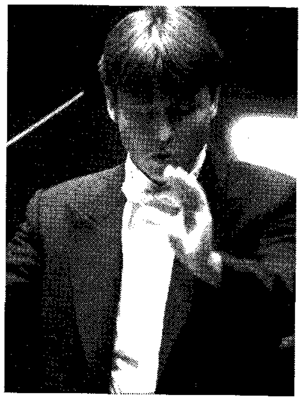


Ivo Pogorelich
Wednesday, January 17 and Sunday, January 28

"A remarkably talented pianist..."
–New York Times

Anne Sophie Mutter
Sunday, February 25

"Her technique is seamless... her sense of style impeccable."
–Los Angeles Times



Esa-Pekka Salonen
Sunday, March 24 and Monday, March 25

Maxim Vengerov
Sunday, April 21

"An exceptional musician..."
–New York Newsday

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

MAXWELL'S SMARTS

"The lights are so bright I can't see your faces," William Maxwell said, stepping up to the podium at the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C. "Being here makes me think of ghosts," he went on. "I had a dear friend who spent many days and weeks here, researching to write a book on Shakespeare. And I had another who worked in the library for a time. I hope they are both present tonight." He was standing on the stage of the Folger theatre, an antique-feeling space with high galleries, square columns, and a wood-and-plaster Elizabethan stage house, all of which give it a ponderous elegance. The occasion was the eighth annual PEN/Malamud Award reading, and Maxwell was being honored, along with Stuart Dybek, for excellence in the practice of the short story. A large, warmly appreciative audience was present, including Maxwell's wife, Emily; members of Bernard Malamud's family; and the writers Charles Baxter, Nicholas Delbanco, Alan Cheuse, Maxine Clair, Michael Collier, Patricia Browning Griffith, Howard Norman, Susan Richards Shreve, William Warner, and Mary Helen Washington.

A few minutes earlier, Dybek had spoken of how privileged he felt to be on the same stage with William Maxwell. He then honored the elder writer in the best way one writer can honor another: by being terribly good. He read a densely lyrical and dramatic story called "We Didn't." It charmed the house and made everyone glad of the short story, this superior form of entertainment.

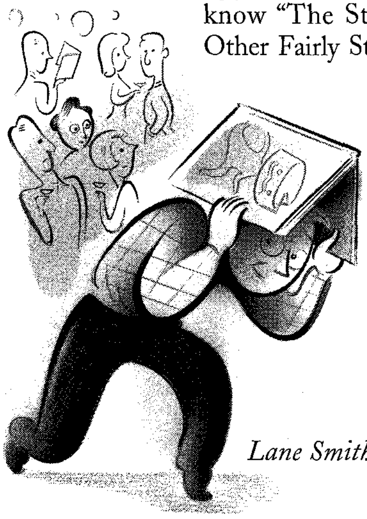
And now Maxwell was standing on the podium. Well into his eighties, with the slightest hesitation in his movements, he still seemed wonderfully calm, a man spending a little time with friends. He wore a dark suit and looked very trim; his dark eyes were animated with the same humor and interest one finds in his stories. As a staff writer and fiction editor at *The New Yorker* for nearly forty years, Maxwell worked with such writers as John Cheever, Eudora Welty, and Mavis Gallant. Meanwhile, he wrote stories and novels that are as good as or better than those of just about anyone else: "Over by the River," for instance, and the short novel "So Long, See You Tomorrow," which is set in his native Illinois and, like so much of his work, evokes the simple grandeur of life in a small Midwestern community in the recent past.

Now, opening the bound galleys of his recently published collected stories, "All the Days and Nights," Maxwell looked into the brightness again and said, "I'm going to read a story called 'The French Scarecrow.'" There was a murmur of recognition from the crowd. Very gracefully and somehow confidingly, he began to read. He read softly, pausing—without seeming to monitor the sound—for the laughs. His precise, elegant, and quietly humorous study of unease was a perfect complement to the electricity of the Dybek story.

When Maxwell finished and the applause died down, Janna Malamud Smith was introduced. In the name of her father, she presented the award to both writers, and then everyone adjourned to the Great Hall for wine and finger food. The wine tasted as though it had been aged in a stone jar, but nobody seemed to mind. Maxwell and Dybek signed their books and answered questions amid a general feeling of well-being and affection. If the ghosts of Maxwell's friends were somewhere in the sculptured brown lines of the Folger theatre and Great Hall, then they must certainly have been travelling in the company of Bernard Malamud, for the spirit of that marvellous writer of stories was invoked by every facet of the evening.

CHEESY KID STUFF

Little Red Running Shorts. An ugly duckling who grows up to be an ugly duck. A raving math lunatic. If you know "The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales" or the new, best-selling "Math Curse," you know Lane Smith's demonic illustrations of Jon Scieszka's thoroughly ironic, moral-free children's books.


Lane Smith

"One of the reasons I became an artist was that I didn't like interacting with other humans," Smith, who is thirty-six, was saying recently at an authors' holiday party at Books of Wonder, in Chelsea. Unfortunately, Smith said, he now often finds himself in demand for book signings. "Next month, we're going to the Paramus Mall, where I'll be reduced to acting like Zippy the Drawing Chimp," he said. "While Jon reads, I'll be getting high on the fumes of scented Magic Markers and drawing the Stinky Cheese Man. But, really, it's fun to meet

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PALMA

all those kids." He paused for a second, raised one eyebrow on his pleasant, pale face, and snickered.

Smith and Scieszka are two of several star cynics whose hip, flip characters have the nation's children in thrall right now. But they're by no means the first, if you think of the petulant Alice and the madcap Eloise. "Maurice Sendak got in trouble for many of his books," said Smith, who seemed almost reluctant to have to be such a wise guy. "I'm just one in a long line of problems."

While other guests at the party, including Jules Feiffer and Lucy Dahl (the daughter of Roald Dahl), drank, networked, and gossiped, Smith paged through William Bennett's new best-seller, "The Children's Book of Virtues." He went easy on it, because its illustrator was a friend: "Our books do well because they have *this* to play off of" was all he said as he riffled through chapters on friendliness, kindness to animals, and perseverance. The chapter on manners reminded Smith of his own book, "The Happy Hocky Family," in which Henry Hocky straps Holly Hocky's favorite doll to a skateboard and pushes it down a hill.

Since he has movie deals pending, along with a Tim Burton project in production, Smith thought it best not to comment on Hollywood, other than to say that he'd liked "Toy Story" very much. He liked "Leaving Las Vegas," too, he said, "but it would have been better if they'd animated it." Before departing, Smith said he was delighted to find copies of "The Carrot Seed," by Ruth Krauss, on the shelves. When he was a child, it was his favorite book. "Everybody tells the kid his carrot will never grow," he said, "and he just tells them to go piss off."

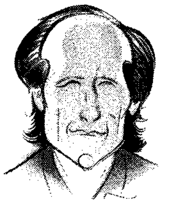
Later, after trashing Bennett's book, Jules Feiffer (whose new book, "A Barrel of Laughs, A Vale of Tears," imparts virtues without listing them) was in the rest room with his daughter, Halley, eleven. They were inspecting graffiti that Smith had drawn of the Stinky Cheese Man sitting on the toilet and asking, "What stinks?" Miss Feiffer smiled. Her father didn't. "That's not very nice," he said. By that time, of course, Smith was long gone.

DEDICATED LINES

GIVEN the brevity of the typical book dedication, one might think that, after all the imaging and brainwork and sheer brute inputting that goes into the manuscript, coming up with a little greeting wouldn't be too hard. How tough could it have been for Fitzgerald to put "Once Again to Zelda" at the front of "The Great Gatsby," or for Dashiell Hammett to write "To Lillian" on "The Thin Man"? On the other hand, there's John Cheever's dedication for "The Wapshot Chronicle"—"To M with love: and with best wishes to practically everybody else I know"—a weird fusion of not very secret secrecy and almost anxious expansiveness, which shows there's more to this trick than meets the eye. Some writers discuss their approaches:

Bobbie Ann Mason: "Book dedications are strange, because they're a private message in a public place. They're like reading the personals."

Joseph Heller: "I have a confession to make. I have not the slightest understanding of what they mean. That's why none of my books except the first one have any."



Richard Ford: "I thought about it only once, thirty years ago, and never had to think about it again. All my books are dedicated to my wife. It's never been an issue for me—never for one nanosecond. She is the fundamental sanction of my work and always has been."

Ward Just: "My last seven books were all dedicated to my wife. Besides me, she is the one most responsible."

Kaye Gibbons: "In the new printings of 'A Virtuous Woman,' I'm deleting my ex-husband's name and replacing it with my second and final husband's, Frank Ward. It was irritating to me every time I opened the book."

Christopher Buckley: "I was finishing 'The White House Mess' just as I was about to be married. I asked Lucy to put a sheet of paper in the typewriter, and I said, 'Now type, "For my wife, with love." ' And she cried. I dedicated my first book, 'Steaming to Bamboola,' to John Lennon. It was about the merchant marine, and he was the son of a merchant seaman, and he died while I was writing it, and I was very sad, so I just dedicated it to him. And for years afterward people would come up to me and say, 'How awful for you. I know you two were very close.' "

Nicholson Baker: "I hope to dedicate several more books to my wife, although not every one. You don't want to be like Nabokov. Every book was to Véra, to Véra, to Véra. It was like a tic, as if he weren't thinking. I also hate those dedications that are so aggressively insiderly, like 'You know who you are.' If the book is that much of a private act, why publish it?"

Susanna Moore: "My favorite book dedication is by Gregor von Rezzori. In one of his books, he just says, 'For whom else but you!' "

William Gaddis: "You never dedicate a book to another writer. You'd worry that he wouldn't like it, that he'd say, 'I don't want credit for affecting that fellow's writing.' "

John Updike: "You worry, with another writer, that he won't like the book, that you're like the cat who's bringing a dead mouse to the back door."

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN . . .

JAY MCINERNEY'S contributions to Stephen Fry's recent apartment-warming, on the Upper East Side, were a corkscrew and an electric toaster, while Richard Curtis, who wrote "Four Weddings and a Funeral," brought the entire contents of his hotel refrigerator—"*including* jelly beans and roasted peanuts," Fry pointed out. As Fry, a thirty-eight-year-old British actor and writer, circumnavigated his guests, he radiated the sort of exquisite kindliness possible only to the extremely tall. "Oh, pish!" he said, fending off one compliment too many.

Some New Yorkers may remember Stephen Fry as the imperturbable butler Jeeves in "Jeeves and Wooster" on PBS or from movies such as "Peter's Friends." Yet Fry remains much less known in New York—a circumstance that delights him—than in Britain, where he is an enfant terrible in theatre, in movies, and on television. During the past five years, moreover, he has published two novels, "The Hippopotamus" and "The Liar," both of which became best-sellers in England.

There is in Britain, though, a suspicion of success, and it can lead to incredible savagery. Fry gave this foible something to feed on when he appeared in London in "Cell Mates," a play by Simon Gray. The reviews were generally hostile, though far from rabid, but years of obsessively hard work had reduced Fry to a state of depression, and he found his critics all too plausible. On the brink of suicide, he fled to Germany after the play's third night, forcing it to close. "I thought there would be the odd story in an arts diary of a newspaper. I was astonished by the press," Fry says. He found himself catapulted not only into the tabloids but also onto the front page of the London *Times*. Paparazzi swarmed around him.

Of his undesired celebrity, he says, "There's no point moaning about it, but one can't laugh it off with a light laugh. Because it *happened*. You have to wander around with a tight smile on your face all the time. Here, it's so relaxing to be able to walk down the street with your head up. Without all those strange *celebrity maneuvers*—pretending to brush your hands through your hair so as to cover your face, all those kinds of things."

Fry is here mostly because he likes New York, though. He is working on a third novel, which is as yet untitled. "There will be some New York material, but it's not a New York novel," he says. "It's a blur in the womb. The latest scan shows rather a strange shape that we dare not release to the world."

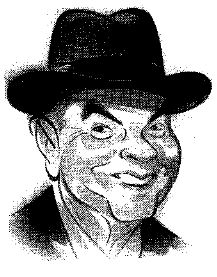
And acting? "When I finish this piece of writing, there are a couple of films that I hope to do," Fry said. One of these projects is "A Confederacy of Dunces," the cultish 1980 novel by John Kennedy Toole, which Fry has turned into a screenplay for Paramount. He added, feelingly, "But I'll certainly steer clear of the stage for a while."

BOOK DEALERSHIP

At a reading the other day in Colma, California, for Lewis Lapham's new book of essays, "Hotel America," attendees nibbled and sipped and discussed N.E.A. funding cuts as the author, who edits *Harper's*, worked the room. Meanwhile, near the lectern where Lapham was

"FOX HERE . . ."

For the writing of my first four novels, Joe Fox was my only editor. When Joe died last month in his office at Random House, where he'd been an editor for thirty-five years, he was sixty-nine. I had just recently gone back to him, and back to Random House, for the publication of my eighth novel. In the sixteen years that I was away from Random House and *not* Joe's author, Joe and I were always friends—and Joe insisted on editing me, even when his editorial comments were restricted to my cooking. "How many people are you feeding?" he'd ask, lifting lids off pans, eating—from the stove—with his bare hands. Or, "You should freeze this and have it another night—it's utterly wasted on *them*. They never eat anything, anyway."



Joe Fox

And, of course, I remember Joe's response to what I thought at the time would be the first sentence of "The World According to Garp." I'd typed it on a postcard and sent it to him. "How's this for an opening line?" I asked. The sentence was "In the world according to Garp, we are all terminal cases." Fox fired a postcard back: "Sounds like a *last* line to me." As usual, he was right: four years later, it did end up as the last line of the novel. Joe never exactly said "I told you so," but when I sent him the finished book, he sent me another postcard. "Terrific last line!" it said.

When he called on the phone, he also kept it simple. "Fox here. . . ." That was all. Sometimes sarcastic, often curmudgeonly, and uncommonly melancholic, he closed his letters with an "Affectionately," and there was nothing but the truth in that, too; despite his gruffness, he was a warm and deeply affectionate man.

Yet when I dedicated my third novel to him, he edited my dedication—he changed his name to his initials. And when I protested, he lectured me—he beat me down. "An editor should not only prefer anonymity, he should seek it," Fox pronounced. (At a time when other editors were seeking their own imprints, Joe loathed *any* attribution.) He could even edit a dinner party: he had a habit of leaving dinner parties early, and he was not above announcing that he was leaving because he was bored.

Joe often became irritated by my relentless avoidance of pronouns and, more specifically, by my habit of referring to my main character by more than one name. For example, in my most recent novel, "A Son of the Circus," Dr. Farrokh Daruwalla was "the doctor" and "Farrokh" *and* "Dr. Daruwalla"—sometimes within the same sentence. "You should learn a small but useful pronoun," Fox wrote in the margin of my manuscript. "In a word, 'he.' "

"From the very start," George Plimpton told me, "Joe had to get words right. He edited a parachute-club newsletter that had a lugubrious feature called 'Accident Corner.' Here, accidents, usually fatal, were carefully described, including the amount of dirt displaced by the victim. Joe edited these so that it seemed that nothing more untoward had happened than settling into a hammock, which was of great comfort to anyone jumping out of an airplane."

Joe's old friend Peter Matthiessen called him "the most dedicated and impassioned line editor I ever worked with." (Fox edited "At Play in the Fields of the Lord" and "Far Tortuga," among other books of Matthiessen's.) And Joe's friend James Salter said of him, "He had rules for everything, or at least knew the way it should be done. Some of his orchestrations were difficult, but you bowed to them because when it was most important, on the page, he mostly bowed to yours."

It was Joe Fox who introduced me to George Plimpton and Peter Matthiessen and Jim Salter. When we talked on the phone the week Joe died, each of us had a hard time trying to say what all of us felt. In a word, devastated. —John Irving to speak, a couple inspected the sticker price of a white Infiniti J30. So goes the next generation of cross-merchandising: the auto-dealership reading.

"Attend the reading and return to Stewart Infiniti for a test drive within one month of the event to receive a complimentary hardcover copy of 'Hotel America' " was the lure held out on postcard invitations, mailed to *Harper's* subscribers with San Francisco-area Zip Codes. Sean McLaughlin, the magazine's vice-president for public relations, explained, "We arranged the reading in association with Infiniti. It's a value-added merchandising service we sometimes provide to our advertisers."

Colma, a small town southwest of San Francisco, is better known for its cemeteries and auto malls than for its thriving literary scene. "We've never done anything like this before," one salesperson said, surveying the crowd as Lapham approached the microphone. Before committing to future literary events, the salesperson added, "we'll have to see how this one goes."

The dressed-down group of nearly a hundred looked more like used-bookstore denizens than potential Infiniti buyers. As Lapham read an essay about the onetime *Saturday Evening Post* managing editor Otto Friedrich, several salespeople folded their hands as if in prayer. By the beginning of Lapham's second selection, a mock-Republican rewrite of "A Christmas Carol," most of the salespeople had moved outside. As Lapham read, a sign that said "Parts" swung gently in the recirculated air above his head.

During the question-and-answer period, a phone rang on the floor and was eventually answered by a salesperson in a glassed-in cube to the right of the J30. One audience member had the courage to ask Lapham what kind of car he drives. The editor smiled slyly for a moment, then replied, "I myself drive a Volvo. But that's because I'm not privileged enough to drive an Infiniti."

POLISHED SAPPHIRE

NEXT spring, Knopf will publish "Push," the first novel of the controversial African-American poet Sapphire, which has things in it like a repulsively fat, unwashed black mother forcing sex on her over-two-hundred-pound teen-age daughter in an apartment in Harlem. Sapphire's work can make writers who think they've been *truthful* feel extremely jealous.

Right now, Sapphire is introducing a prose poem from her book "American Dreams" to about fifty people at Posman Booksellers, at 1 University Place. It's Sunday afternoon. If you've read Sapphire's poetry, it can be a big surprise to see that, though she isn't exactly shy, she's not rough-looking or rough-sounding, either. There are more white people than black people here, and more old than young. There's a huge clock on the wall behind Sapphire's head, and two cats are writhing around on the floor by the podium. Sapphire looks about forty and doesn't have much hair on her head; it's hard to tell if she shaves it or what. She has fashionably thin eyebrows and is wearing red lipstick. Her clothes are all black: ankle-length skirt, short-sleeved blouse, sturdy lace-up boots. She isn't tall and she isn't short. She isn't fat and she isn't thin. She has a diehard's neck and wears a ring through one nostril, three earrings in one earlobe, and four in the other. There's a puckered band of skin just below her hairline that makes her look as if she'd been wearing an old-fashioned rubber bathing cap.

The poem Sapphire is introducing is called "There's a Window." She introduces it like this: "If you've ever been in prison or in your parents' house, you know what it's like." She says this as easily as if she were saying, "If you've ever had a hamburger and a shake," and the few younger people in the audience laugh a little. The piece is about two women having forbidden sex in prison. The older one is fifty and has a silver crewcut.

Sapphire is reading something the narrator says to the other woman: "Yeah, I don't wanna fuck no piece of denim. Take off that ugly ass dress." White-haired white people in the store have almost no expression on their faces. They could be listening to anyone saying anything, or maybe this is how they look when they're alone in their living rooms.

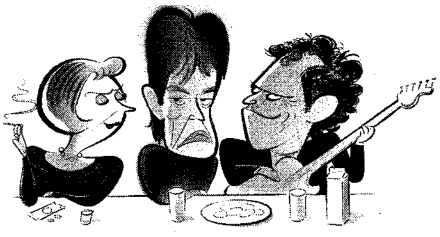
Sapphire is reading: "I was lost in a world, brown, round, smelling like cigarette smoke, pussy and Ivory Soap." A middle-aged woman with thick, short, straight grayish hair will say afterward that Sapphire is "the most important person writing in America" and add, "She's changing the world by being an outlaw." A woman with jaw-length gray hair and blue eyes will convey the idea that she hadn't been prepared but she'd liked it.

Sapphire keeps reading: " 'Here,' she said pushing something thin slippery and cool into my hand. I recognized the feel of latex. 'Just to be on the safe side,' she said. My heart swelled up big-time inside my chest."

When the reading is over, a retired man from Honduras says, "Nowadays anything goes. All this mention of sexual functions and bodily organs, I accept it. I don't necessarily like it. Years ago, I saw Allen Ginsberg talk about how he masturbated with cucumbers or something, and by comparison she was mild."

A SONG'S REVISION

THE Rolling Stones' "Stripped," the new album by the Mt. Rushmore of rock bands, consists of mostly acoustic reinterpretations of evergreens from the Stones canon. One of them, "The Spider and the Fly," tells the story of a touring rock and roller getting picked up by a slightly used female fan in a bar after a show. Fans will recall one of the original song's growly couplets:



Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

She was common, flirty, she looked
  about thirty . . .
She said she liked the way I held the
  microphone.

This, more or less, is how the lyric is rendered on the liner notes of the new album, too. But obsessive listening to the record itself reveals a sly alteration:

She was shifty, nifty, she looked about
  fifty . . .
She said she liked the way I held the
  microphone.

"The Spider and the Fly" was written in 1966, when Mick and Keith were both around twenty-three. They're older now, but still, in their way, gallant. ♦

"Maxwell's Smarts," Richard Bausch; "Cheesy Kid Stuff," Bob Morris; "Dedicated Lines," Jamie Malanowski; "Out of the Frying Pan . . . ," Anthony Haden-Guest; "Book Dealership," Chris Santella; "Polished Sapphire," Alison Rose; "A Song's Revision," Hendrik Hertzberg.

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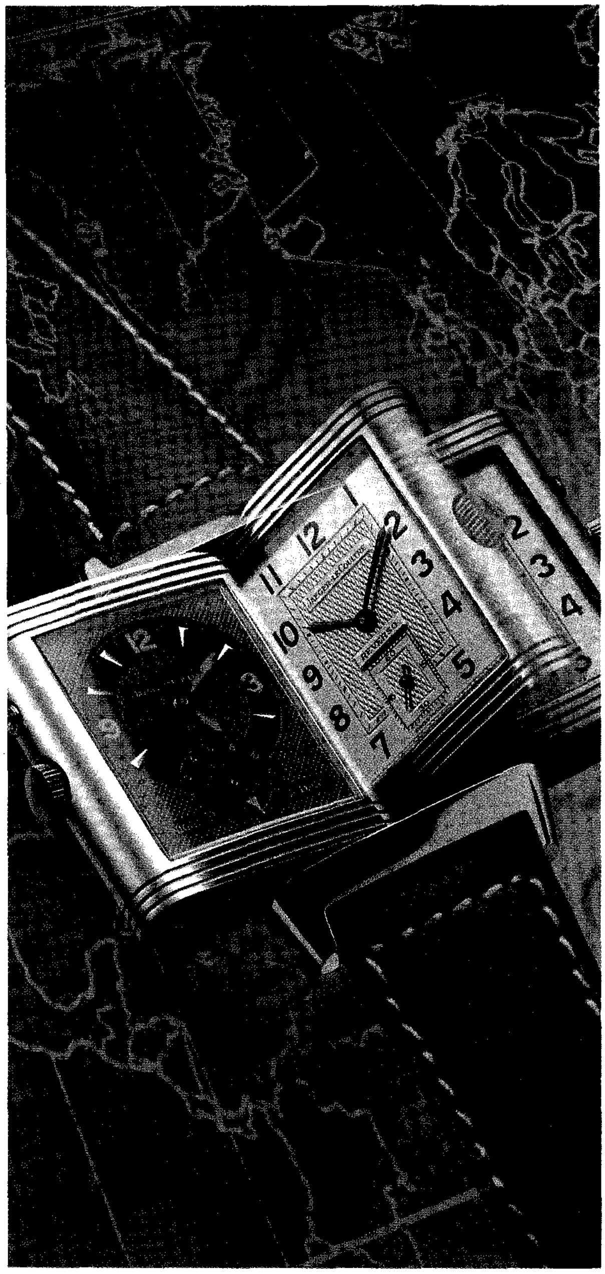

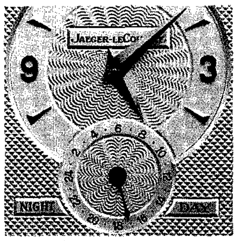

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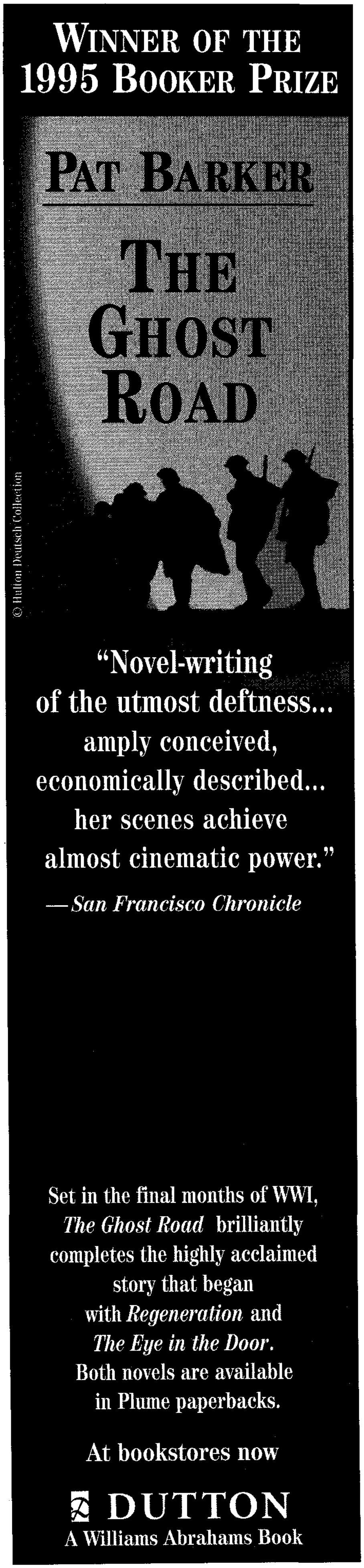

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LIFE AND LETTERS

CHEKHOV IN HEBREW

Learning to read at the far end of the world.

BY AMOS OZ

I GREW up in Jerusalem, in a tiny apartment, hardly three hundred square feet. A cubicle and another cubicle and a smaller one for a kitchen. It was dark and stuffy but full of books. Wall to wall. My father could read sixteen or seventeen languages. He could speak eleven. (All of them with a Russian accent.) My mother spoke four or five languages and read in seven or eight. They would speak Polish and Russian between themselves when they did not want me to understand. They read books in German and English for culture. They probably dreamed in Yiddish, but they taught me only Hebrew. Perhaps they feared that if I knew other languages I might be seduced by the deadly charms of Jew-hating Europe. In their inner hierarchy, farther west meant higher on the cultural scale. They regarded Tolstoy and Dostoyevski as their own but, at the same time, they probably maintained that Germany—despite Hitler—was more cultured than Poland or Russia; France more than Germany; England more than France. About America they were not so sure: shooting Red Indians and winning girls. . . . Europe remained for them a forlorn promised land of squares and belfries, bridges and cathedrals, streetcars and forests, hamlets and meadows.

Our neighborhood, Kerem Avraham, was really the end of the world, a godforsaken place. I knew about the rest of the world through my stamp collection. It was far away. Even the Land of Israel was very far away: somewhere beyond the horizon a new race was being bred of new Jews who had undergone a certain mutation—heroic Jews, pioneering, bronzed, strong, and stoic. Diametrically opposed to the traditional Jew of the Diaspora. Brave young men and women who had turned the dark night into an intimate friend; young men and women who had advanced past all inhibitions between him and her, past all restraint.

They lived in Galilee, in the valleys, far away. Sometimes I would go with the other children to watch them unload their produce at the wholesale fruit-and-vegetable market. We would breathe deeply, intoxicated with the aroma of their different world. They came to us from the dark side of the moon, a splendiferous place where important things occurred, where they struggled to build a new nation.

ON the dark side of the moon, there was also a city called Tel Aviv, a fascinating place of which I knew very little. But I did know that the newspapers were printed there, and the theatres were there, and new forms of art and many political parties and stormy debates and, above all, great Jewish athletes. And the sea filled with suntanned, muscular Jews who knew how to swim. Swimming was unthinkable in Jerusalem. It required different genes.

How far away Tel Aviv was! Throughout my childhood, I visited the city only five or six times. We would go to spend the Passover holiday with my mother's sisters and their families. In Tel Aviv everyone walked differently; they walked the way the astronauts trod on the moon. Every step was a leap of twenty feet, because gravity in Tel Aviv, in those years, was weaker than in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem you would first test the ground with the tip of your sandal; when you finally set your foot down, you would not be very quick to move it again. After two thousand years of exile, when finally setting foot in Jerusalem you had better not relinquish your foothold too hastily lest someone else take it away. And if you moved your foot you would not be too quick to put it on the ground again. God knows what enemies lie in wait underneath. Haven't we paid dearly so many times in the past for being too trusting, for not taking adequate precautions? That is how people walked in Jerusalem. In Tel Aviv, by contrast, the whole city was a grasshopper.

We used to speak of Tel Aviv with a mixture of envy, condescension, and admiration, and also with a certain undertone of conspiracy, as if Tel Aviv were a secret project of the Jewish people and we had to bear in mind that the enemy might be listening. A brand-new city springs out and spreads: Tel Aviv. Going to Tel Aviv was an expedition. Even telephone contact was a complex undertaking. We used to telephone the family in Tel Aviv once every three months or so, even though we had no telephone at home and neither had my aunts. (It was 1943 or 1944, and I was four or five years old.) First, a letter would be dispatched to Aunt Chaya and Uncle Zvi, indicating that "on the nineteenth, which is a Wednesday since we know that on Wednesdays Zvi finishes work early, we will call you at the corner pharmacy at five o'clock. Please expect our call." The letter would be sent way ahead of time, and then we would sit and wait for the reply, which would finally arrive: "Wednesday, the nineteenth, is fine. We shall be there and expect your call at five o'clock. Don't worry if your call is slightly later—we will wait."

I no longer remember whether we would put on our best clothes for the excursion to our neighborhood pharmacy, from which we would place the phone call, but I would not be surprised if we had done so. There was something very festive about all this. On Monday, my father would say to my mother, "You haven't forgotten, Fania, have you? This week we are going to phone Tel Aviv." On Tuesday morning, my mother would say to my father, "Aryeh, don't be late on Wednesday so there won't be a slipup." And he would answer, "Me? Late?" And the two of them would turn to me: "Amos, don't make any trouble. Don't catch a cold and don't fall down before Wednesday." On the last evening: "We want you to go to bed early so that tomorrow on the phone you will be chipper. We don't want them to think you're not getting enough to eat."

We lived on Amos Street. The pharmacy was around the corner, on Zephania Street. At three o'clock, my father would say to my mother, "Don't you start anything new now, so you won't be pressured for time."

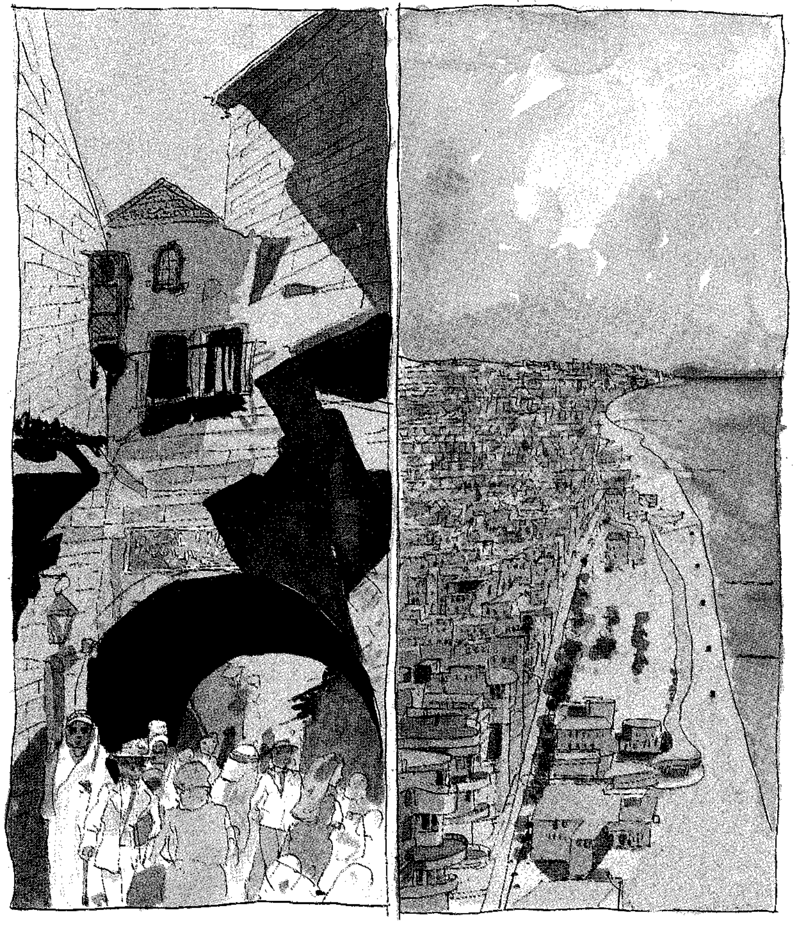
"I'll be all right. But you—don't you go losing yourself in your books now."

"I'm keeping an eye on my watch and Amos will remind me."

So there I was, four or five years old, burdened with historic responsibility. Again and again, I would dash to the kitchen clock and I would decree: twenty-five minutes to go, twenty minutes to go, fifteen minutes to go. And, at that, we would set out for the pharmacy. Upon arriving, we would greet the pharmacist, "Good afternoon, Mr. Heinemann, how are you? We have come to make a phone call to Tel Aviv." He had, of course, been given advance warning. He knew all along that we would come on Wednesday, but we saw fit to remind him. Mr. Heinemann would reply gravely, "Yes, yes, I know. Please take a seat." Then my father would state, "I shall call now." Mother would ask, "Isn't it a bit early? It's still a few minutes ahead of time." He would say, "Actually, it takes some time to get through." (There was no direct dialling at the time.) Mother would appeal, "But what if you do get through right away and they are not yet there?" Father would argue, "In that case, we will try one more time." She would say, "But don't you think they might be anxious in case they walk in and discover that we have already placed the call?" By the time this argument was over, it would be almost five o'clock. My father would rise to his feet, pick up the phone, and say, "Madam, would you be so kind as to connect me with Tel Aviv six-four-eight." (Or something like this—it was a three-digit world.) Sometimes the operator would respond, "Would you please hold the line and wait your turn, sir? I'm afraid this may take a few minutes as, at the moment, the Postmaster General is using the line," or Mr. Siton, or Mr. Nashashibi. And we would grow anxious.

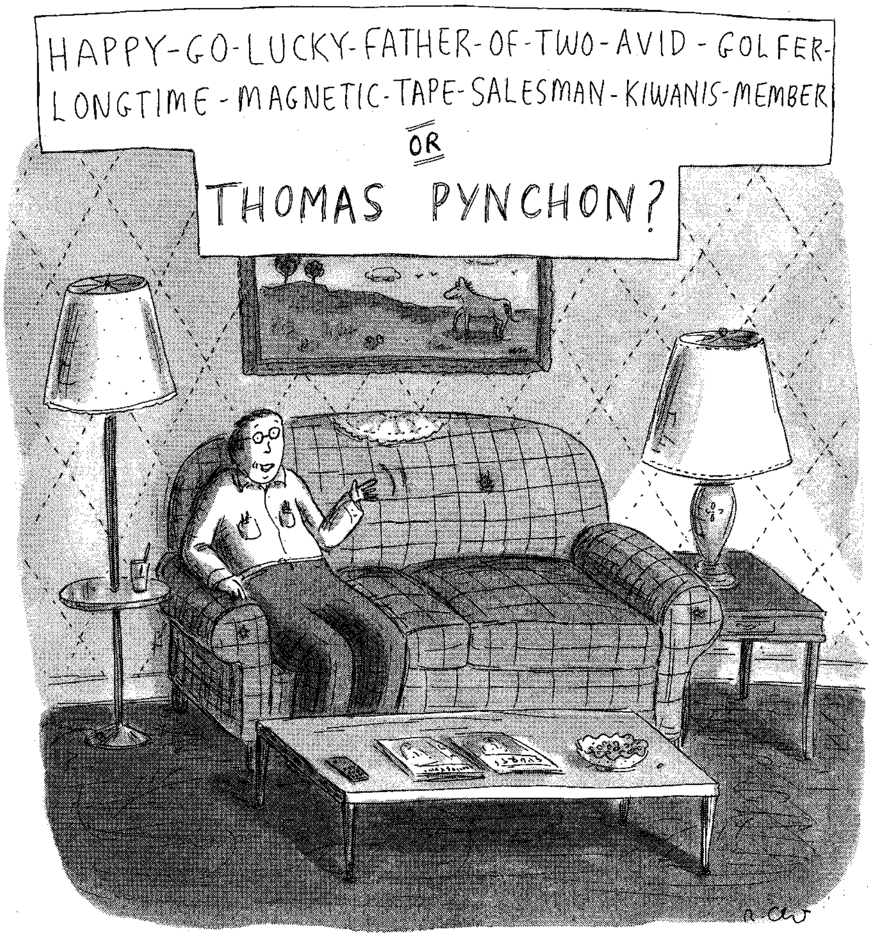
I could virtually see this one and only line connecting Jerusalem with the exchange in Tel Aviv and, through it, with the rest of the world. And here this line is busy, and as long as it's busy Jerusalem is cut off. I could envision this line winding its way over the hills and between the mountains. I thought of it as a miracle. But what if wild beasts were to attack and gnaw the line at night? Or some bad Arabs were to cut it with their knives? Or there were a brushfire? God knows, a thin vulnerable line was stretched out there, roasting in the sun. Anything could happen.

Eventually, Father would assume that the Postmaster General or Mr. Nashashibi had completed his call and he would say, "Excuse me, Operator. I did ask you, if I'm not mistaken, to connect me with Tel Aviv six-four-eight." She would say, "Yes, sir, your request has been duly noted. Please await your turn." Father would comment, "Of course, Madam, I will certainly await my turn, but there are people waiting at the other end as well." Thus he would politely imply that al-



We lived in Jerusalem; heroic Jews lived in Tel Aviv. That was real life.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER


HAPPY-GO-LUCKY-FATHER-OF-TWO-AVID-GOLFER-LONGTIME-MAGNETIC-TAPE-SALESMAN-KIWANIS-MEMBER
OR
THOMAS PYNCHON?

though we were people of culture there were limits to restraint. We are civilized people, but we are nobody's fool. We are not sheep to be led to the slaughter. Gone are the days when one could do with the Jews as one wished. That time has ended. At last, the telephone would ring in the Tel Aviv pharmacy and the conversation would go roughly as follows:

"Hello, Zvi?"

"Speaking."

"This is Aryeh calling from Jerusalem."

"Hello, Aryeh. This is Zvi. How are you all? Everything is fine at this end. We are talking to you from the pharmacy."

"Same here. What's new?"

"Nothing special."

"How are things going, Zvi?"

"There's nothing new in particular. How are things with you?"

"Fine. No news here."

"No news is good news. Is everything really going well up there?"

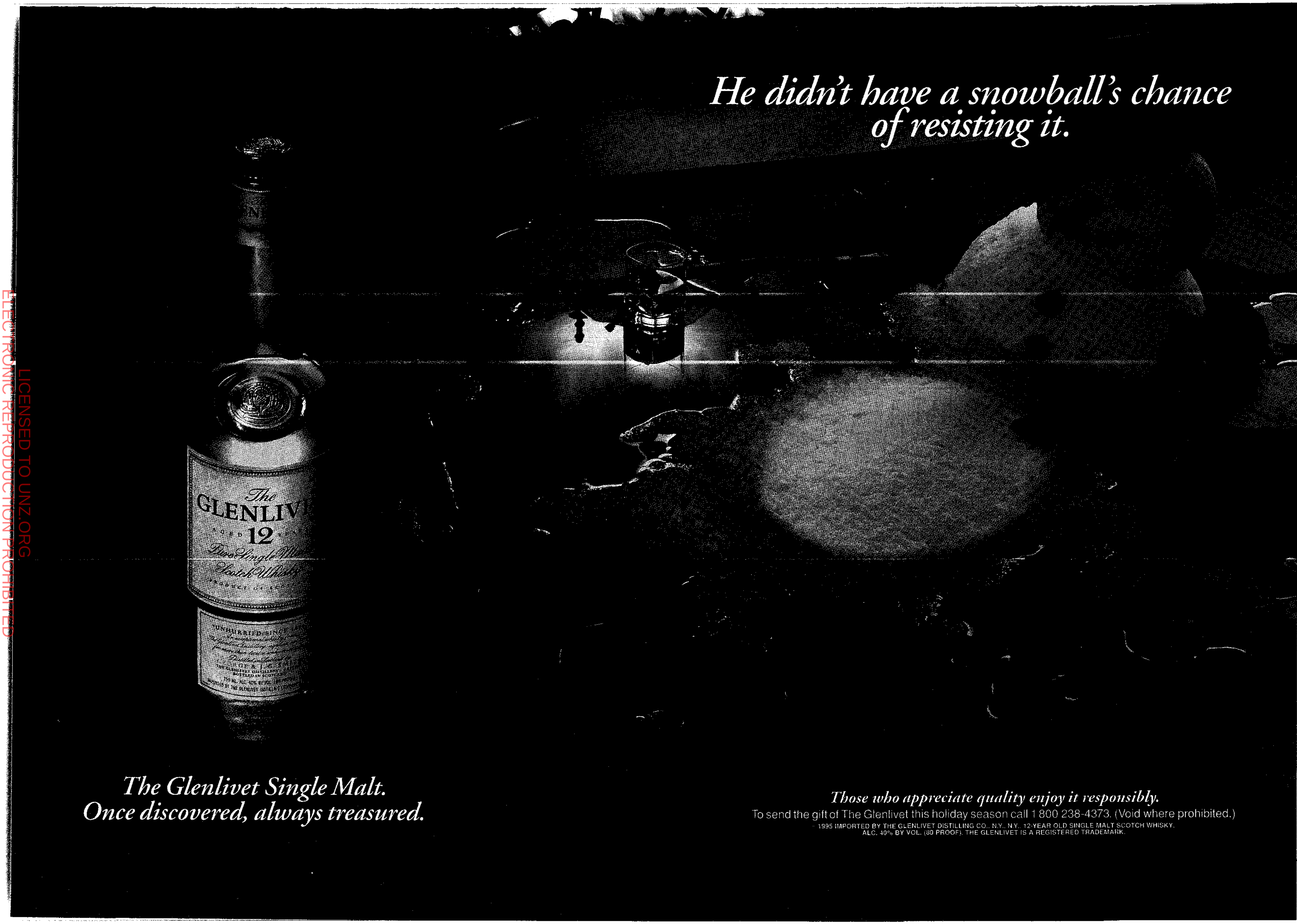
"Yes, indeed, everything is excellent. And now Fania wants to speak to you."

And then the same thing all over again. What's going on. What's new. And now Amos will speak with you. And that was it: How are you? Very well. We'll talk again soon. It's good to hear your voice. Yes, it's good to hear you, too. We shall write you a letter and determine a time for our next call. We will speak again soon. Yes, we definitely will. Soon. Goodbye. Take good care of yourselves. All the best to you. And to you.

But now I know that this was not at all funny. Life was hanging by a thread. Today I understand that they were not at all sure whether they would ever speak again. God knows what was about to happen. Violence, a pogrom, a massacre, a war, a catastrophe. Hitler's tanks had been advancing in North Africa and in the Caucasus, reaching almost to our doorsteps from two directions, so that what sounded like empty small talk over the phone was not at all empty. It was just sparse. As these telephone conversations come back to me, I realize how hard it was for them—not just for my parents but for all of them—to express personal feelings. Public sentiment was no problem. They were highly emotional people. They could passionately argue about Bakunin or about Trotsky. They could reach the verge of tears debating colonialism, or exploitation, or anti-Semitism, but when they wanted to convey a personal emotion they were struck dumb. There was something arid and clenched, even terrified, the heritage of many generations of suppression: the bourgeois European codes of restraint reinforced the small-town religious Jewish inhibitions. Almost everything was considered improper. Besides, there was an acute shortage of words. Hebrew was not their natural language, nor was it, in those years, a language for intimacy. You couldn't really control the precise tone and shade of what you were saying. Even people like my parents, who had a command of Hebrew, had no real control of it. It probably felt like driving an unfamiliar vehicle in a strange city.

ALL sets of codes were upset in that immigrant world. There were no "locals." Everybody was more or less a new immigrant from somewhere. Everybody feared sounding ridiculous, and at the same time everybody occasionally ridiculed others. My father was a man of letters, in a necktie and a cheap jacket, a librarian, a man of moderately conservative right-wing views. Each time he confronted a world reformer, a revolutionary theorist-cum-laborer, he was in total disarray. He knew exactly how to conduct a conversation with such a counterpart back in Warsaw or Vilna, where one knew one's place yet chose to sound democratic and uncondescending. Here in Jerusalem, everything was different; not upside down, as in Communist Russia, just different. On the one hand, Father was middle-class while his partner in conversation was a self-proclaimed proletarian. On the other hand, this proletarian was a pioneer, a hero, the new salt of the earth, whereas my bookish father knew, in his heart of hearts, that he was a bit of a deserter from the front lines of those building this new homeland.

Most of the neighbors were lower-middle-class—clerks, shopkeepers, schoolteachers, dentists—and nearly all of them sworn writers of letters to the editor. They were no longer synagogue-goers, but they did light Sabbath candles, just to be on the safe side, or perhaps in order to retain some sense of Jewish familiarity. Great talkers they were, and yet they maintained that the time had come for the Jewish people to drop the realm of words and to set about *doing*. On this topic, they were fine orators. Where should the Zionist enterprise go from here? What ought we to be saying, loud and clear, to the British government? How can we liberate



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the working class here, and everywhere? Everybody would come on Saturday afternoon to our tiny garden for a glass of Russian tea, talking passionately while listening to others distractedly.

THE novels of Tolstoy and Dostoyevski were discussed incessantly, but years later, when I first read Chekhov's stories in Hebrew translation, I was convinced that he was one of us. I remember the way, even as my parents' friends talked about the impending new world order, their fingers would play with the brims of their hats, and the terrible embarrassment that made them blush whenever my mother bent forward a bit to serve the cookies, revealing a hint of her modest décolletage. Oh, their fingers! They looked as if they were trying to swallow one another. All of this has been immortalized by Chekhov.

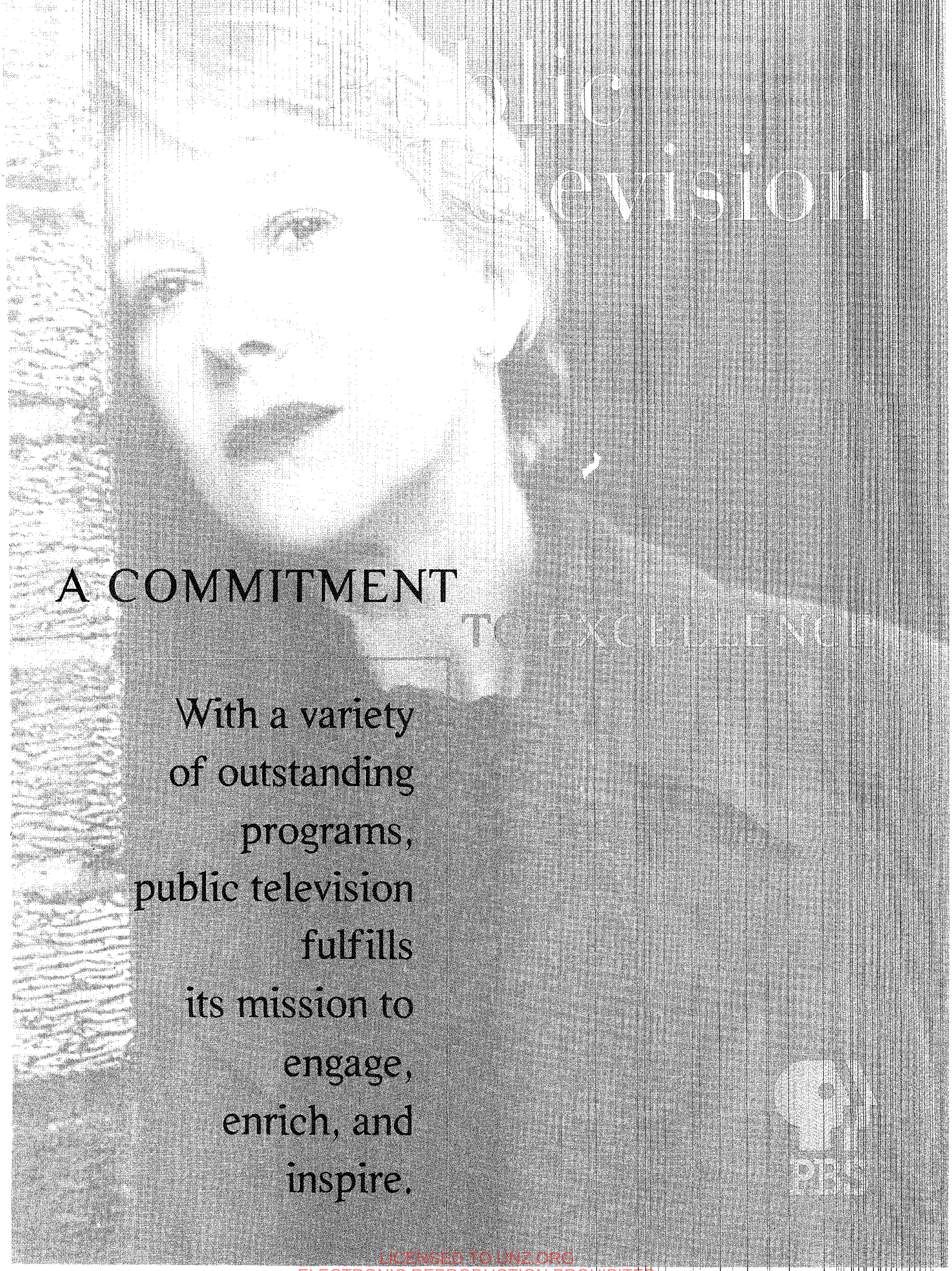
Chekhov also captured our sense of provincialism: Somewhere else in the world there is real life. Never here. Real life is pre-Hitler Europe, vibrating with *kultura*, where the lights are on every evening and the ladies are wrapped in furs and the gentlemen bend to kiss their hands and together they go out to the opera house or the ballet, or go to pass an evening in golden places with chandeliers radiating with hundreds of tiny lights. That is where life pulsates. That is where the magnificent artists create the masterpieces, falling violently in love with unique ladies.

Remote echoes would wind their way to Kerem Avraham about the mistress of a great artist who had fallen in love with another great artist, always ending in glorious tragedy. Not that I had the faintest idea what mistresses were. There were no mistresses in Jerusalem. There were women, lady friends. There were life partners. There were even "affairs." People said, very reluctantly, that "something is going on between Lubiansky and Nakdimon's lady friend." I realized that the expression "something is going on" was loaded with a dark secret. But a mistress? That was Biblical. In the whole of Jerusalem, there was not, nor could there be, a mistress. Maybe there were one or two in Tel Aviv, I thought; there were all sorts of wonders in Tel Aviv.

In our parts, people lived reluctantly. Everybody, not just my parents, made cautious calculations. You went to Mr. Auster's grocery store and you had to make a choice between Arab-village cheese and kibbutz cheese. Arab cheese was a little bit cheaper than kibbutz cheese. It was categorical that we bought only local, not imported, products, but could Arab-village cheese be regarded as a local product? If you buy Arab cheese, you betray Zionism. Somewhere in the mountains of Galilee or the Negev wilderness, a kibbutz girl with tears of proud poverty has wrapped this cheese for you. You must buy this Zionist cheese. On the other hand, if you boycott the product of the Arab villages will you not eternalize the hatred between the communities? Those simple, pure-hearted Arab fellahin are, after all, the local incarnation of Tolstoy's muzhik. Are you really going to punish poor Arab villagers just because their Arab landlords are Jew-haters? Just because the British are inciting them against us? No. Therefore you must buy Arab cheese. And yet God knows what the hygienic conditions really are in those village dairies. They may be swarming with microbes. Microbes were one of our biggest horrors. They were like anti-Semitism: nobody actually saw them but everybody sensed them lurking everywhere. So in the grocery shop a little argument would develop among the customers. On the one hand, "There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you" (Exodus 12:49), and therefore we have to buy Arab cheese. On the other hand, "The poor of thine own city come first," and therefore we must buy kibbutz cheese. But then what would Tolstoy say about him who selects cheese on the basis of religion or origin? What about love of humanity? What about universalism? Yet aren't you ashamed to prefer Arab cheese to kibbutz cheese just because it is cheaper by a penny? Shame on you! Actually, shame on you either way. Life was full of such shameful choices.

I STARTED reading, almost on my own, when I was still very young. What else was there to do? The nights were much longer then. The electric light was poor, interrupted by long power failures. Half the time there was a curfew, imposed by the British, so we had to be indoors from sunset on. Very often we lived by candlelight or kerosene lamp. Even when the electricity had not failed, we used it sparingly. My parents would always install weak light bulbs, not so much because of the cost but because bright light was wasteful and waste was immoral. There was always the underprivileged half of the world out there to be considered, the starving children in In-

Public Television



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THROUGH THE LENS OF HISTORY:
A SERIES MARCHES ON

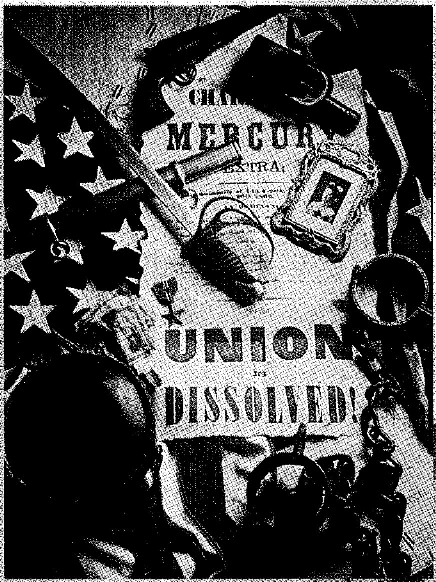
With the landmark series *The Civil War,* award-winning documentary filmmaker Ken Burns teamed up with PBS to make television history by offering an in-depth exploration of the conflict that tore this country apart and defined us as a nation.

Following his calling to tell America's story, Burns then turned his attention to documenting the nation's pastime. His epic *Baseball* series, a "General Motors Mark of Excellence Presentation," is inventively divided into nine episodes or "innings" covering the game's evolution from its origins in the 1840s through the present. Much more than a history of the game, *Baseball* offers a fascinating look at our national culture, exploring our search for heroes, the clash of labor and management, and the quest for racial justice. "Baseball resonates with us," says Burns, "because it is about us."

To extend the educational impact of this series, PBS has developed a special indexed version of *Baseball* on videocassette, accompanied by a variety of curriculum resources for use in middle and high schools. These materials, as well as lesson plans for college courses, are available from PBS VIDEO, 1-800-344-3337. *The Civil War* is also a college-level telecourse licensed by the PBS Adult Learning Service. Call 1-800-257-2578 for further information. A home video version of the series is available through PBS Home Video, 1-800-645-4727, and at video retailers nationwide.

Ken Burns' exploration of U.S. history continues in fall 1996 with *The West* and the premiere episode of *American Lives.*

With the corporate underwriting support of General Motors, PBS continues to illuminate our nation's past.



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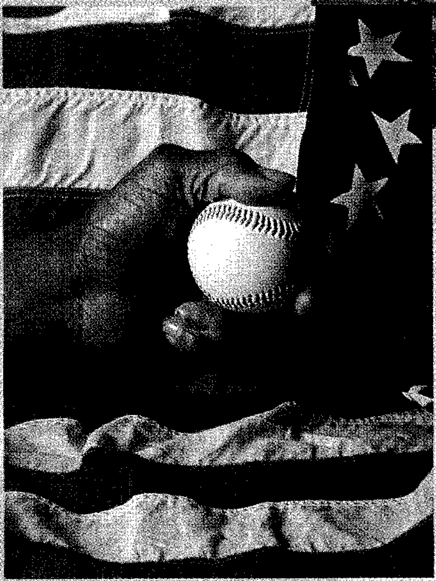

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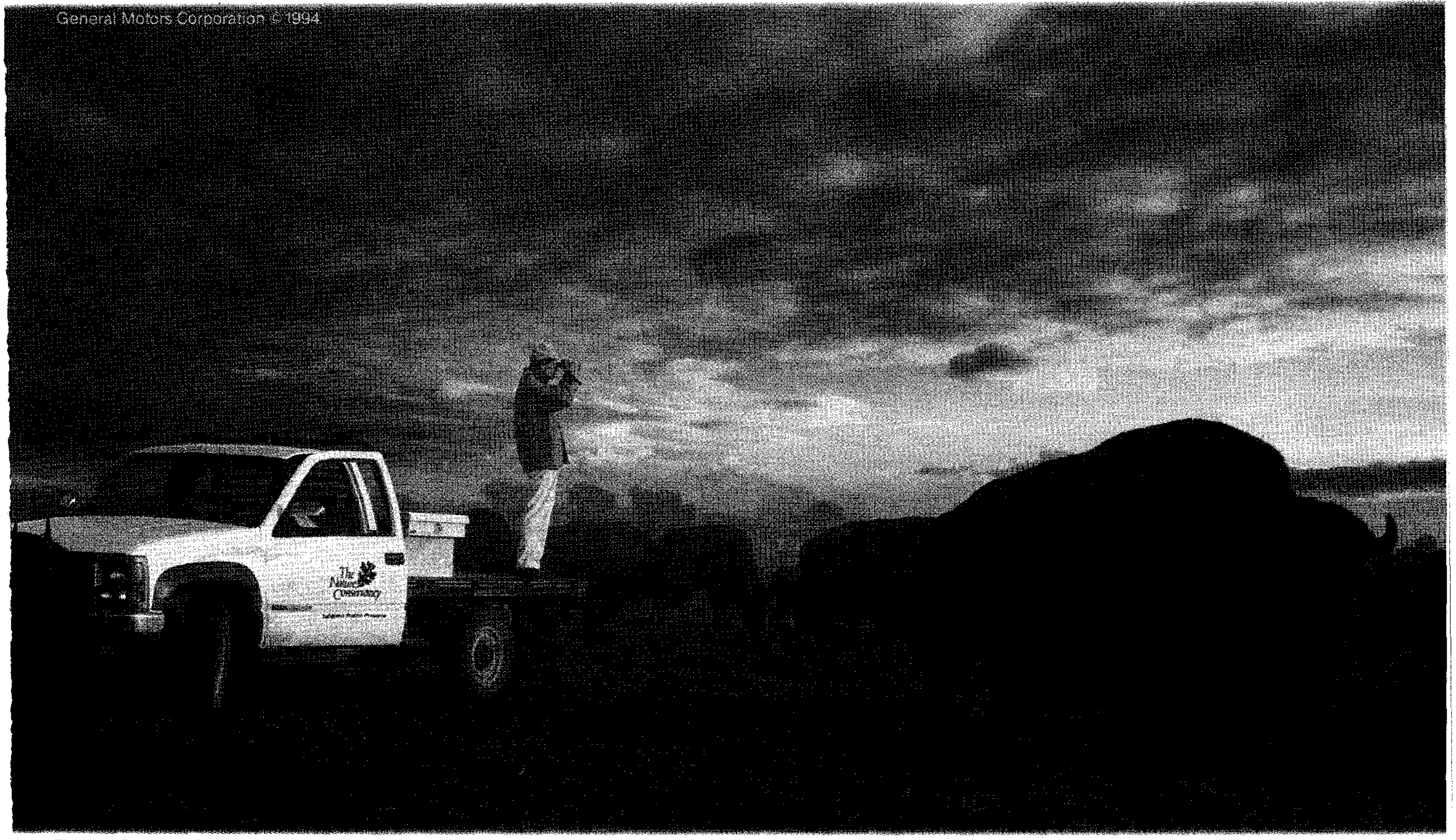
General Motors.

"We've got three trucks and 300 bison, and we've never had a single traffic jam."


General Motors Corporation © 1994

People and nature can live in harmony, according to John Sawhill, President of The Nature Conservancy. For instance, bison at the Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Oklahoma share miles of pristine grassland with tourists and scientists. To protect and preserve the land, The Nature Conservancy gets corporations, landowners and private citizens to work together to help. The goal: safeguarding the environment without destroying jobs or businesses. That's a goal General Motors shares. So we're supplying funds, talent and even the GMC Trucks used to maintain Tallgrass. John says, "The Conservancy gets results you can walk around on." And the results are truly spectacular.

NEWS IN 1996:
THE NEWSHOUR WITH JIM LEHRER

Throughout its history, *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* defined excellence in broadcast journalism. Under the leadership of its co-anchors, Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer, the program provided viewers with in-depth analyses of the day's issues and events. With his partner now focusing on a full-time writing career, Jim Lehrer is fostering the evolution of *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*. Apart from its shift in focus from two anchors to a single anchor and an ensemble of journalists, *The NewsHour* remains the standard-bearer for thoughtful, thought-provoking and thoroughly first-rate broadcast journalism. As always, *The NewsHour* will dig deeper, exploring the many facets of the news that it covers with fairness, compassion, and a profound respect for the intelligence of its viewers.

© Don Perdue

Just as it did in 1992, PBS will offer prime-time coverage of the summer's political conventions, presented by *The NewsHour* in partnership with NBC News. While the networks abandon coverage until late-evening, PBS will offer entree to this great tribal ritual of politics throughout prime time. With corporate underwriting support from Archer Daniels Midland Company and New York Life Insurance Company, *The NewsHour* will continue to offer the kind of information, insight, and access that is truly vital to our democracy.

For one hour every weeknight, viewers are informed and enriched by *The NewsHour*'s special insight and thoughtful analysis.

Speaking of his company's support, New York Life's Harry Hohn evokes the sense of commitment to the public interest that all PBS funders share. "As the Chairman and CEO of a very large company, I don't have much free time for television," he says. "On the other hand, I believe news coverage—to be helpful—should be more than just selected sound bites. *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer* on PBS provides a high-quality, in-depth look at the issues which are shaping our nation and our society. That's why I watch it, and why my company, New York Life, helps fund it."

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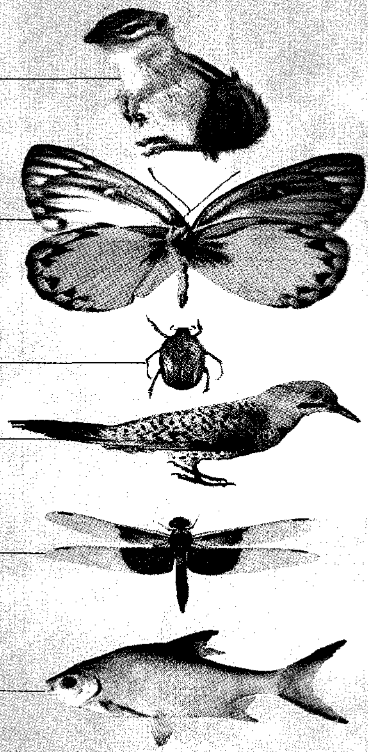
Chipmunk: 1.3 years.
Butterfly: 2 weeks.
Beetle: 21 days.
Flicker: 6-7 years.
Dragonfly: 48 days.
Tinfoil barb: 7 years.

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NEW YORK LIFE

1996 Season Preview

A Guide To Some Of Public Television's Best Upcoming Programs

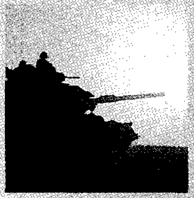
These programs are made possible by an unparalleled collaboration of funders, including five million individuals and families who contribute to their local public television stations; federal, state, and local governments; businesses; foundations; and colleges. Please consult local TV listings for the exact broadcast schedule in your area or call the public television station serving your community for more information.

JANUARY

FRONTLINE
"The Gulf War"

Tuesday and Wednesday, January 9 and 10

As America approaches the fifth anniversary of the war with Iraq, FRONTLINE investigates what really happened during the invasion of Kuwait.



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MARK RUSSELL COMEDY SPECIALS

Wednesdays, January 10, March 20 and May 15, and Monday, February 26 ("Mark Russell's Viva Italia!")

In his half-hour live specials, humorist Mark Russell takes satiric aim at the presidential campaign and other hot topics. In the one-hour special, "Viva Italia!," he goes on a zesty tour of Italy.

NOVA
"The Day The Earth Shook"

Tuesday, January 16

It's been two years since the Northridge, California, earthquake and one year since the quake in Kobe, Japan. NOVA tries to determine if these quakes can help predict when the next big one will hit.

The National Issues Convention

Saturday and Sunday, January 20 and 21, and Friday, January 26

The country's first National Issues Convention will bring presidential candidates together with a representative sample of American citizens for an unprecedented dialogue about the major issues shaping the 1996 campaign. On January 26, a special program chronicles the events of the Convention and includes analysis and reporting segments.

The National Issues Convention is part of PBS's Democracy Project, a special multi-media initiative to develop innovative coverage of current events and political issues with particular emphasis on the 1996 presidential election.

"Richard Avedon: Darkness And Light An 'American Masters' Special"

Wednesday, January 24

For the first time in his 40-year career as celebrated fashion photographer *cum* controversial

GENERATING DIALOGUE WITH THE McLAUGHLIN GROUP

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Every week, public television invites viewers to listen in as four of America's most popular and respected journalists engage in a rapid-fire debate on issues of national concern. This Emmy Award-winning program features thirty minutes of news analyses, wit, wisdom, opinion, and commentary in a uniquely dynamic format. Regular panelists include Jack Germond, Eleanor Clift, Mort Kondracke, Clarence Page, and Fred Barnes.

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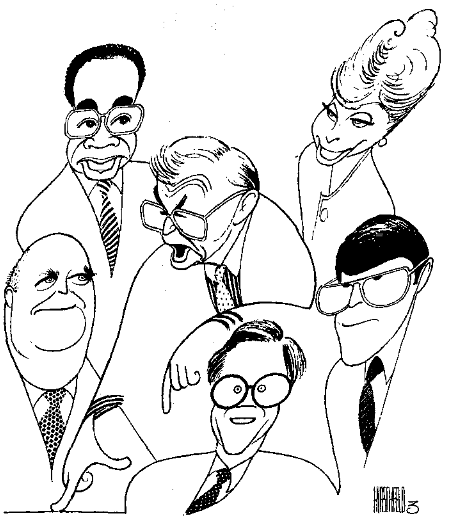

ADVICE & DISSENT

They're The McLaughlin Group. Each with a view that's contentious and contagious. (clockwise from left) Jack Germond, Clarence Page, John McLaughlin, Eleanor Clift, Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes.

Made possible by a grant from GE.

The *McLaughlin* Group

Check your local listing for station and time.

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portrait artist, Richard Avedon gives television intimate access to his life and work.

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THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE "The Battle Over *Citizen Kane*"

Monday, January 29

In *Citizen Kane*, Orson Welles took on mighty newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. This program tells how the influential publisher marshaled all his resources to suppress Welles' masterpiece.

FEBRUARY

GREAT DRIVES

Beginning Thursday, February 1

Five hours, five drives, five visions of America — these programs follow celebrity drivers as they travel on such mythic thoroughfares as Route 66, the Pacific Coast Highway, and Florida's A1A.

MASTERPIECE THEATRE "The Final Cut"

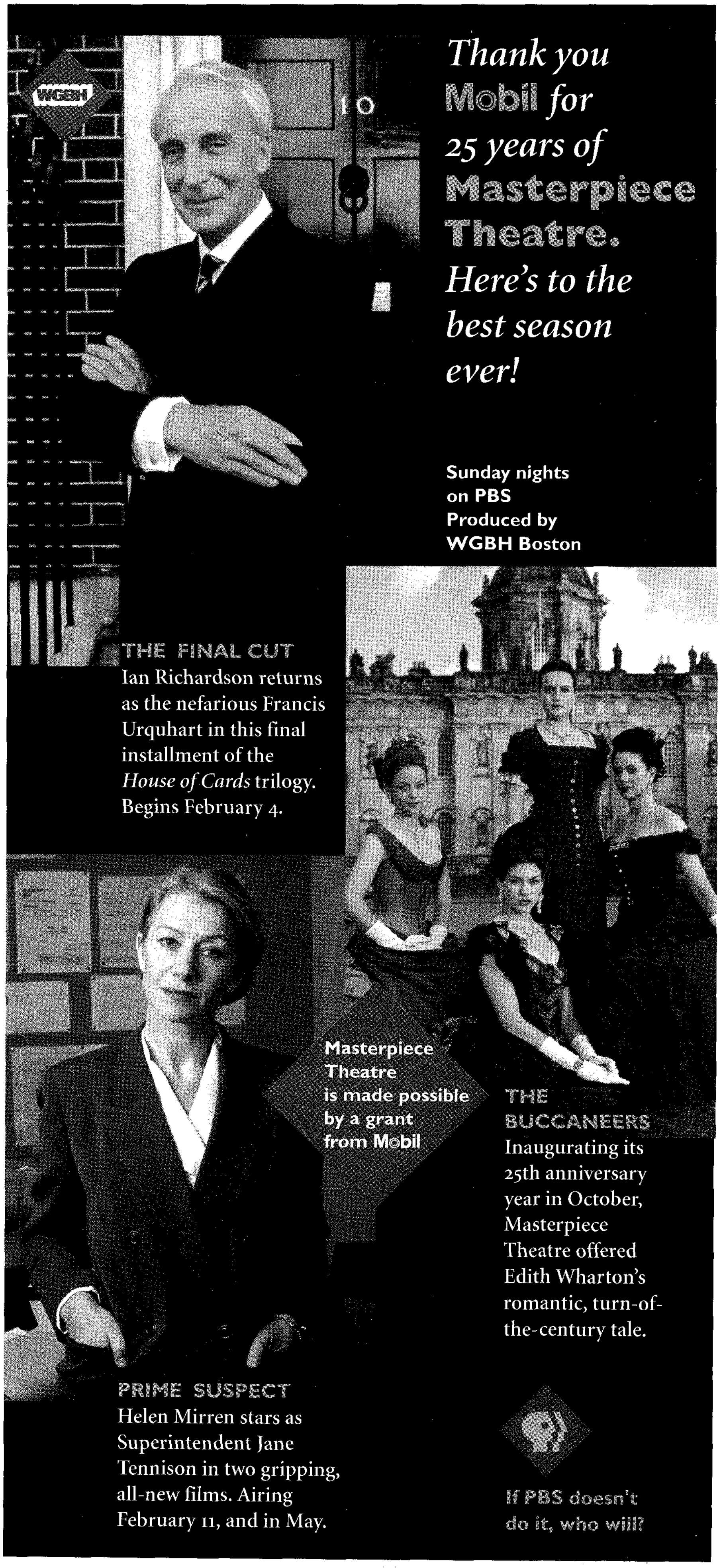
Sunday and Monday, February 4 and 5

This third and final series in the trilogy that began with "House of Cards" and continued with "To Play the King" stars Ian Richardson as the conniving and always amusing British Prime Minister Francis Urquhart.

ALIEN EMPIRE

Sunday – Tuesday, February 11 – 13

This three-part NATURE miniseries employs groundbreaking video techniques to illustrate the bizarre universe of the 30 million species of insects with which humans uneasily share the planet—and without which the human race could not survive.



Thank you **Mobil** *for 25 years of* **Masterpiece Theatre.** *Here's to the best season ever!*

Sunday nights on PBS
Produced by WGBH Boston

THE FINAL CUT
Ian Richardson returns as the nefarious Francis Urquhart in this final installment of the *House of Cards* trilogy. Begins February 4.

Masterpiece Theatre is made possible by a grant from Mobil

THE BUCCANEERS
Inaugurating its 25th anniversary year in October, Masterpiece Theatre offered Edith Wharton's romantic, turn-of-the-century tale.

PRIME SUSPECT
Helen Mirren stars as Superintendent Jane Tennison in two gripping, all-new films. Airing February 11, and in May.

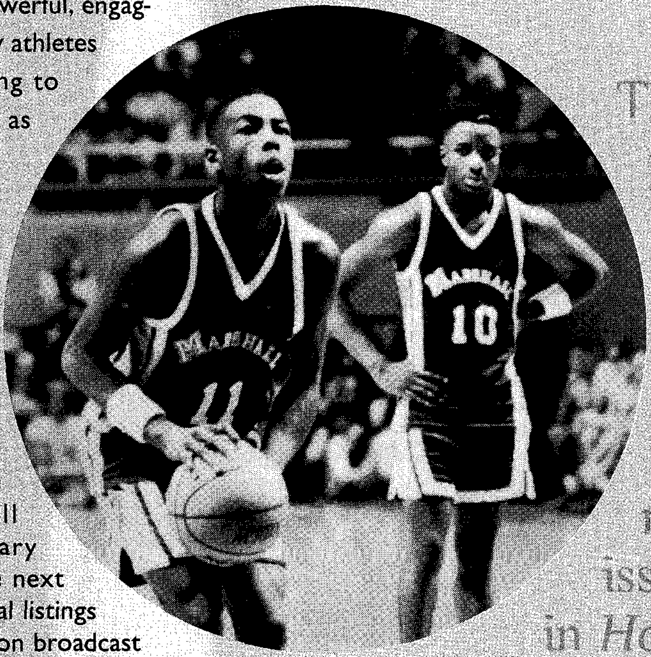
If PBS doesn't do it, who will?

HOOP DREAMS:

A WINNER REACHES OUT

Photographs, This Page © Fineline Features

Originally conceived as a public television project, the remarkable documentary *Hoop Dreams* received its first significant production grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1990 and finishing funds from PBS. For more than five years, filmmakers Steve James, Frederick Marx, and Peter Gilbert chronicled the lives of William Gates and Arthur Agee, two African-American high school students in Chicago who dream of playing in the National Basketball Association. The film is a powerful, engaging portrait of two inner-city athletes and their families struggling to overcome enormous odds as they pursue their dreams.



Following its critically acclaimed theatrical release, *Hoop Dreams* returned to PBS for its television premiere in November of 1995, complemented by *A Hoop Dreams Reunion*, a follow-up program featuring an update on the lives of the film's subjects. PBS will broadcast the documentary five more times during the next three years (check your local listings in 1996). The public television broadcast of *Hoop Dreams* is made possible by a grant from the Chrysler Corporation.

Chrysler is also the major sponsor of a nationwide outreach campaign, the Chrysler Hoop Dreams Challenge, a project conceived by the documentary's co-producers, Kartemquin Films in Chicago, public television station KTCA in St. Paul, Minnesota, and by the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University in Boston. Targeting twenty major U.S. cities, the outreach campaign includes both high-profile and grass-roots community events and distribution of the Hoop Dreams Student Playbook and Teacher's Guide. These publications are designed for use in middle and high schools to facilitate discussion of the film's themes, including the importance of education and self-motivation; the role of sports in inner-city communities; familial conflict and support; teen and single parenthood; drugs and violence; and the educational system's role and responsibility in recruiting young athletes.

> The outreach project is designed to educate individuals and communities about the many complex issues raised in *Hoop Dreams.*

MASTERPIECE THEATRE PRIME SUSPECT

Sundays, February 11 and April 28

Helen Mirren plays Detective Superintendent Jane Tennison of the London police department in "Inner Circles" and "Scent of Darkness."

© Granada Television, Mobil Corp.

Sailing The World Alone

Wednesday, February 28

Every four years, a few hardy men and women undertake the ultimate yacht race — to circumnavigate the globe alone in the BOC Challenge. This program reveals the sailors' courage, resourcefulness, and occasional despair as they face the many challenges on their epic journey.

APRIL

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA PRESENTS "James Levine 25th Anniversary Gala"

Saturday, April 27

This special celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Met debut of conductor James Levine. Telecast live from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, this once-in-a-lifetime event features more than 50 of the world's major operatic stars and some of opera's most beloved music.

In Search Of The Oregon Trail

Monday, April 29

Based largely on the diaries of the pioneers, this special looks at the actual day-to-day struggle of the great migration westward, exploring two areas often misunderstood: the real relationships of the pioneers with the Native American tribes and the role women played on the trail.

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MAY

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER "Pavarotti Plus!"

Wednesday, May 1

The latest edition of this popular vocal spectacular features famed tenor Luciano Pavarotti appearing with other stars of the opera stage.

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dia, on account of whom I had to finish everything on my plate. And so my father would replace a sixty-watt bulb with a forty-watt bulb. Besides, those pioneers in remote kibbutzim had to write their poetry and ideological treatises by candlelight. How, then, could he permit himself a sixty-watt bulb?

Books, however, were plentiful. My father was an addict, a compulsive collector of books. After all, human beings come and go, while books remain forever. He was extremely sensual about books. He liked to touch them, feel them, fondle them, and sniff them. He was a book maniac. In fact, in those days each book had an individual flavor. Father simply couldn't keep his hands to himself; he would immediately reach out, even for other people's books. Many books had a cloth binding, which sometimes parted from the spine in a seductive manner, creating an opening, a gap between cloth and cardboard. One could peek in and get an eyeful of the musky darkness.

Occasionally, there was no money to buy food for the Sabbath. My mother would look at my father. He would look at the bookshelves (which held several thousand books), and I knew it was time to select the lambs for the sacrifice. I could see the pain in his eyes, but he was an ethical man. He knew food was more urgent than books, and that the good of the child must come first. I remember his back at the door, half a dozen precious books under his right arm, and I knew this must be the shape of Abraham's back as he left his tent, carrying the unknowing Isaac, and set out for Mt. Moriah. These were leather-bound books with gilt-embossed titles, brought here from Warsaw or from Vilna. Normally, he would come back an hour or two later, devoid of books, carrying paper bags with bread and milk and eggs and, occasionally, tinned beef. But sometimes he came back smiling happily, looking as if he had just won the lottery, carrying neither food nor his beloved books: he had sold the books, but he bought others instead, because in the secondhand bookstore he had uncovered such irresistible treasures that he couldn't help himself—they were once-in-a-lifetime discoveries.

I WAS about six or seven years old when the first great day in my life occurred. My father cleared part of one of the lowest shelves in his library for my use. To be precise, he bequeathed me ten inches of space. I was allowed to bring my own books, which until then had been piled on the night table next to my bed, and to arrange them upright on the shelf with their backs turned to the world. This was no less than a rite of initiation: a boy who stands his books erect is no longer a child but a man. From that moment, I was like my father. My books could stand. My books were erect.

Alas, I made a dreadful mistake. Father went to work and I was free to do whatever I wanted, but I had a very childish idea of how these things really ought to be done. I arranged my books by height, including books that were beneath my dignity, nursery books from babyhood. I didn't want to exclude them, because I wanted to fill completely the space allocated to me. I was still euphoric, celebrating my triumph, when my father returned from work, cast one disgusted glance at my books, and turned to me with a long silent look that I will never forget. It was a look of disappointment and contempt, if not complete genetic despair. Finally, he hissed from between clenched teeth, "By height? Do you think books are soldiers? Do you think this is an honor guard? A military parade?" There was another long silence, after which he told me the facts of life, educating me about the innermost secrets of libraries. He opened up to me a dazzling view of the varieties of order: books could be arranged by topics, by titles, by chronology, by alphabetical order of the authors, by publishing house, and so on. That's when I learned that life is full of different avenues. That anything could be arranged by very different principles. That there are many different coherent logics in the world. I spent hours on end arranging and rearranging my twenty-five or thirty volumes. That's how books taught me the art of composition—not their contents but their physical being. That's how books taught me about intoxicating twilight zones between the legitimate and the illegitimate. This lesson I cherish for life. When my time came to discover love, I was not a complete novice. I already knew that there were different ways, different possibilities, different avenues. ♦

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Amos Oz and Maggie Bartura.*)

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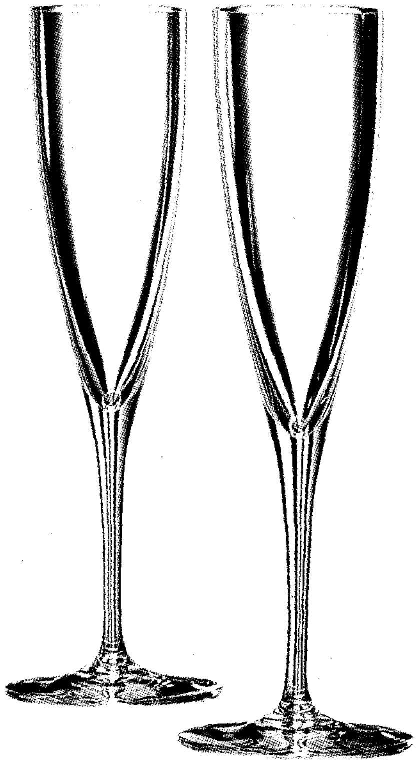

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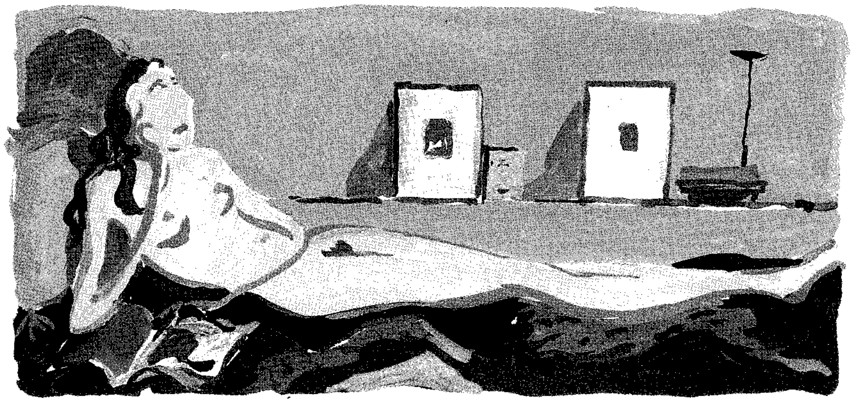
FICTION

PHILOMENA

BY JAY McINERNEY



JEAN-PHILIPPE DELHOMME

THE name of the party is the Party You Have Been to Six Hundred Times Already. Everybody is here. "All your friends," my girlfriend Philomena states in what can only be described as a tart—positively citric—manner. It seems to me that they are *her* friends, that *she* is the reason we are part of this fabulous gala, which takes place in the waiting room of Grand Central, evicting dozens of homeless people for the night. We're supposedly on hand for the benefit of a disease, but we were comped, and so was everyone else we know. "I'm sick of all this pointless glamour," my glamorous girlfriend says. "I want the simple life." This has become a theme. Weariness with metropolitan life in all its colonoscopic intricacy. I wonder if her ennui is somehow related to that other unstated domestic theme: infrequency of sex.

We are accosted by Belinda, the popular transvestite, who I am nearly certain is a friend of my girlfriend's, as opposed to a friend of mine. Belinda is with an actual woman, an ageless one with striking dark eyebrows and buzz-cut white hair, who is always here at the party, and whom I always seem to recognize, and whose name is Hi Howareyou Goodtoseeyou. All the women lately have either three names or just one. Even the impersonators. "Oh, God, hide me," says the woman whose name I always forget. "There's Tommy Kroger. I had a bad date with him about five thousand years ago."

"Did you sleep with him?" Philomena asks, raising one of her perfectly defined eyebrows, which looks like a crow in flight in the far distance of a painting by van Gogh.

"God, I can't remember."

"If you can't remember—then you did," says Belinda. "That's the rule."

Ah, so *that's* the rule.

Later, as we are undressing for bed, Philomena announces preëmptively that she is exhausted.

No nookie for you, buckaroo.

AT LONG LAST, SEX

THE narrator, the day after the party, is helping Philomena choose the outfits for her trip—a versatile taupe suit from Jil Sander, a Versace jacket and ripped jeans for the plane, a fetching little sheath from Nicole Miller for evening, plus an extra pair of ripped and faded jeans, plus three immaculate white T-shirts. If he were more attentive, the narrator might pick up certain clues from the packing, or from her behavior, that this trip is more than it has been represented to be, but he is not suspicious by nature and his powers of observation are swamped by a surge of hormones. When, after trying on the sheath, she slips out of it and asks him to fetch some panties from her dainties drawer, he is overcome with desire for the taut, tawny flesh beneath her teddy. "Please," he pleads. "Just a little slice." He

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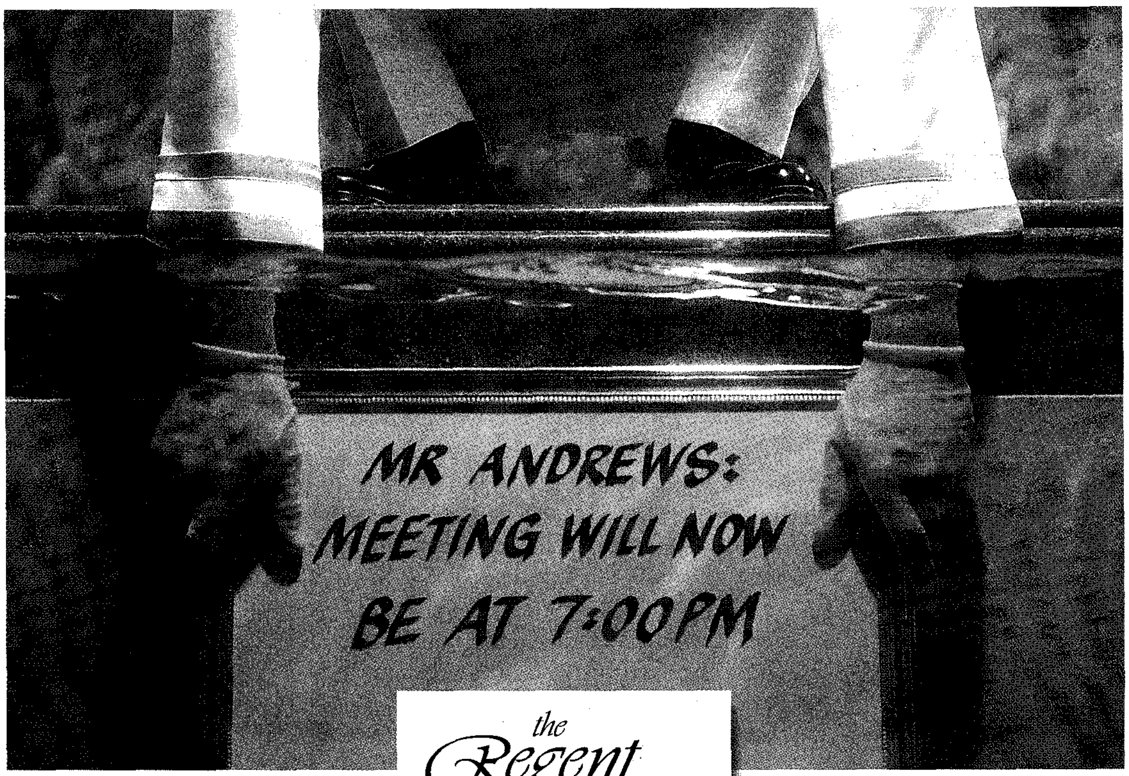

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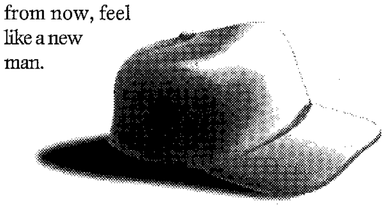

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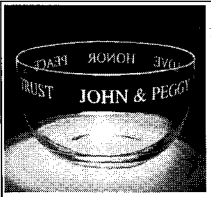

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reminds her that it has been nine days, five hours, and thirty-six minutes. And they're not even married yet.

"No, we're not, are we?" Oh dear, a tactical mistake. Matrimony is a sore point. Luckily, the subject is not pursued, but still she makes him kneel and beg for it.

Craven, genuflective begging ensues, heartfelt and genuine. Please, please, please. He will do anything, he tells her. He will bark like any species of dog she can name, and roll over if necessary. Finally, she peels off the teddy and lies back on the bed like Manet's Olympia, ripe and haughty, a bored odalisque. She is a woman whose image is expensively employed to arouse desire in conjunction with certain consumer goods.

"Fast," she commands, "and no sweating."

The narrator takes what he can get, a grateful consumer.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

THE narrator lives in the West Village, near the river, far enough west that he is spared the Visigoth invasions of provincial teens with boom boxes, just south and east of the meat district. A summer's-evening breeze is imbued with a perfume that wafts from the scrap heaps of decaying flesh stacked outside the packing warehouses; after dark, the streets are taken over by transvestites and the cruising vehicles of their johns; many nights, the narrator is awakened by thick whispers and carnal grunts from the stairwell just outside the bedroom windows. "It's always a tradeoff with Manhattan real estate," the agent cheerfully informed him, and then demanded fifteen per cent of the first year's rent.

CURRICULUM VITAE

THE narrator's name is Collin McNab. That's me, thirty-two years old and not really happy about it. Still waiting for my adult life to begin. Is this my fault? I could blame my parents. That would be *novel.*

I have a job, of sorts. It is called Paying the Rent Until I Write My Original Screenplay About Truth and Beauty. The job description: writing articles about celebrities for a young-women's magazine. A branch of astrology. I'm planning to develop a computer program that will spit these things out with the touch of a few keys, a simple program, since there are very few variables. Already my word-processing program contains macro keystrokes that instantly call up such revelations as "shuns the Hollywood limelight in favor of spending quality time with his family at his sprawling ranch outside of Livingston, Montana." (Control, MONT.) And "There's nothing like being a parent to teach you what really matters in life. The fame, the money, the limos—you can keep it. I mean, being a father/mother is more important to me than any movie role could ever be." (Alt, BABY.) And the ever popular "Actually, I've always been really insecure about my looks. I definitely don't think of myself as a sex symbol. When I look in a mirror I'm like—Oh, God, what a mess." (Shift, WHAT, ME SEXY?) Right now I am trying to write a piece about Chip Ralston, boy movie star, but I cannot seem to track him down. Although Chip Ralston allegedly agreed to this piece, his agent, his business manager, and his publicist are all somewhat evasive at the moment. Is it possible that Chip remembers a rather negative—all right, very negative—review in the *Tokyo Business Journal* that I wrote while living in Japan about his second movie, in which I said that the best acting was done by his car, a racing-green Jensen Healy with sexy wire wheels and a deep, throaty voice?

METROPOLIS

AFTER twenty-four hours, still no message from Philomena but one from the narrator's boss, Jillian Crowe asking for an update on the Chip Ralston piece. There was a twinkling moment when Collin seemed to have the gift of pleasing Princess Jillian, a time when he detected an almost girlish interest in his person and his so-called work, culminating in the evening when he was her escort, a last-minute substitute but an escort nonetheless, to the Costume gala at the Metropolitan Museum. This was the metropolis as it was meant to be seen, in the flattering aphrodisiac light of eminence, a brilliant republic compounded of wealth, power, accomplishment, and beauty. The atmosphere of festive mutual regard extended even to tourists, like Collin, on the happy assumption that their applications for citizenship were pending. He was with Jillian Crowe, therefore he was. If he had first taken the whole thing more or less as a joke, secure in his self-knowledge as a flunky, toward the end of the night he started to feel remarkably comfortable in this new role. Infected by both a desire to please and half a dozen glasses of Krug, he regaled the table with colorful anecdotes about the sexual practices of the Japanese and with the untold story behind a recent celebrity interview. He didn't think that Jillian appreciated these stories quite as much as he had hoped. But, then again, he doesn't exactly remember. He does recall her saying, "Darling, when I try to show you the ropes, do try to pick up more than *just* enough to hang yourself." And then there was Philomena's reaction: furious at being left out, she was also irate at the datelike aspects of what Collin tried to present as a tedious professional obligation.

"Why don't you ask Jillian Crowe to fuck you," became a late-night refrain in their bedroom for some time. It seemed to Collin that he paid dearly for this little outing. At work his novelty simply and immediately wore off, novelty being the cardinal virtue in the value system of the magazine; after that night, the frisson fizzled between Collin and Jillian Crowe.

SUSPICIOUS INFORMATION

COLLIN calls his girlfriend's modelling agency to ask for her hotel in San Francisco.

"San Francisco?" says the booker. "What's in San Francisco? I show no booking for Philomena in San Francisco. In fact, I'm showing no bookings at all. She booked out. Told me she was taking the week off."

Collin feels a painful outward pressure on either side of his skull, above and behind the ears, as if he were growing horns.

FALL

YELLOW leaves fluttering down the face of the building across the street, like messages from a princess in a high tower. Another year going past.

NEUTRAL INFORMATION, I.E. RAW DATA

PHILOMENA BRIGGS, born Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, July 13, 1963. Height: 5' 10". Hair: auburn. Dress size: 4. Shoe size: 8. Measurements: 34-24-34.

INTERPRETATION

THE above data comes from Phil's composite, the business card with pictures distributed by her modelling agency, and is in fact not raw at all but cooked to a turn. The actual birth date is 1961. The place of birth was a town too small to show up on any map. The measurements are obviously suspect. And the last time I bought her a dress, I had to return the 4 to Barneys and get the 6. "The sales clerk told me they ran small," I noted helpfully as she tried it on, knowing that if she got upset with the way she looked in it I might not get lucky for days.

HOW I GOT MY JOB

THE joke around the office is that Jillian Crowe gave me my current job on the celeb beat after she heard that I was living with a model named Phil. Another point in my favor was what I wore to my interview, a vintage Brooks Brothers gray flannel hand-me-down from my father; Jillian thought that I was fashion-forward enough to have anticipated the return of the three-button sack suit. She has since discovered her mistakes.

My contract is up in two months, and no one has approached me about renewal. In fact, my office was recently converted to storage space. I send in my copy via modem from my apartment: vanguard of the virtual office.

MORE ON PHIL

I MET Philomena in Tokyo, on the Ginza Line between Akasaka-mitsuke and Shimbashi. I couldn't help noticing her, of course, the only other *gaijin* in the subway car, a head taller

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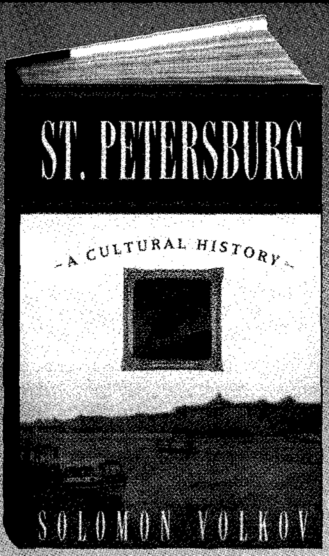

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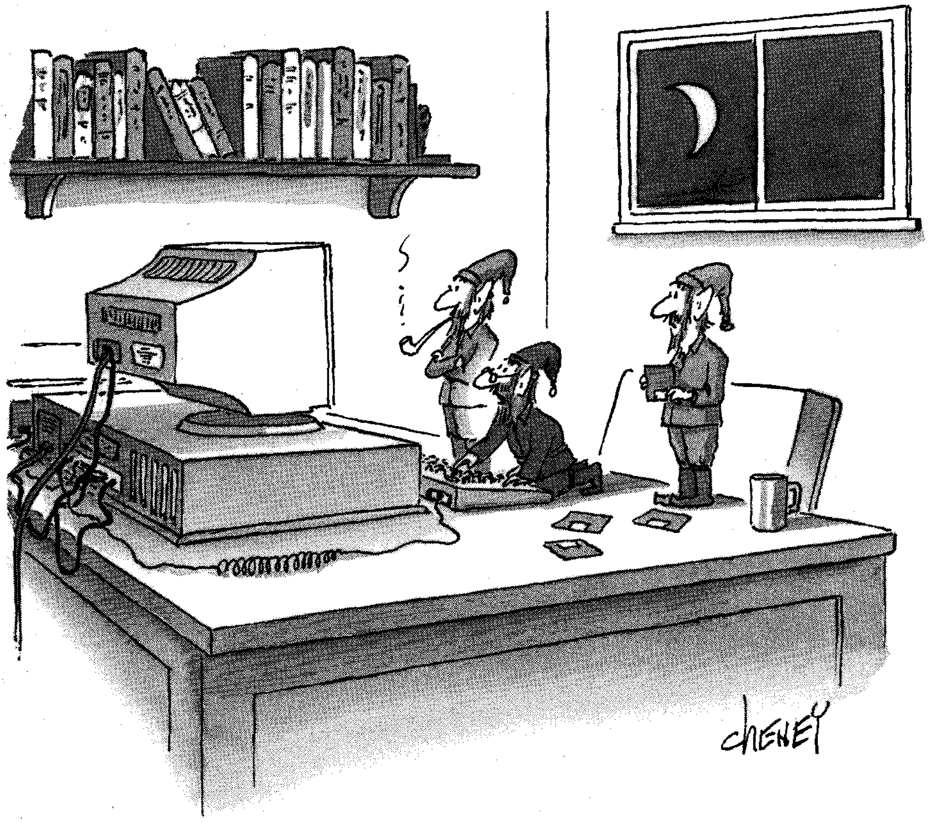
than the indigenous population, clutching her big black modelling portfolio to her ribs, nervously tossing her coppery hair. I was trying very hard not to stare. "Do you know which stop is Ginza?" she asked. I looked up from my copy of "Heike Monogatari," all innocence, my expression one that was meant to say, "What ever in the world leads you to assume that I speak English." At the same time I was thinking, Oh, Jesus, please don't get off the train and walk out of my life—you're the most gorgeous creature I've ever seen in it.

She was in Japan building up her modelling portfolio and her savings account. Aside from her modelish appearance, I was charmed by what seemed to me—after five years in Japan—her archetypal Middle Americanness, the curious alloy of wide-eyed curiosity and other-side-of-the-tracks street savvy. In that stranger-in-a-strange-land context, I, in turn, must have cut a rather striking figure, being able to order food right off the menu, count, ask directions, and shout insults when necessary. Which is to say, I doubt she ever would have shacked up with me in the States. But in the context of adult males known to Philomena, I was practically a saint, just by virtue of nonviolently hanging around. Her father disappeared when she was three, and of her mother's several boyfriends the best that she could say of her favorite was that he was passed out most of the time. She has never really told me the worst of it, and I'm sure I don't want to know. Whenever Philomena, standing in front of the full-length mirror at five minutes to eight, tells me that she hates going out anyway, not to mention all of our so-called friends who are really only my friends, and that she is absolutely not attending the opening/screening/première/party/dinner/wedding or whatever occasion has forced her to confront the imagined shortcomings of her wardrobe and her body; whenever she ignores my pleas for sexual relief; whenever she says, "Nobody really cares about anybody except themselves"—at these times I remind myself that she is still in a bad mood from her childhood. But this behavior did not manifest itself until we had been together a year. And by then she was a relatively successful fashion model in New York, and such comportment was a professional prerequisite.



"This is going to be a tough fix. He's completely obscured the main character's plausible motive for revenge by overdeveloping the setting and peppering the entire chapter with irrelevant flashback narratives."

She moved into my tiny flat in Roppongi. We slept on a single futon that we laid out on the tatami floor each night and folded up each morning. Recently escaped from my official Ph.D. studies, I was keeping carcass and spirit together teaching English and writing movie reviews for the *Japan Times* and the *Tokyo Business Journal*. Two evenings a week I took the train to Shinjuku and conjugated English verbs with Japanese businessmen:

I dump.
You dump.
He dumps.
We dump.

You all dump manufactured goods below cost on the American market in order to gain market share.

On my free nights, I bought mordant pickled vegetables, anthropomorphic ginger root, fat, white, talcy sacks of short-grain rice, skinny fish and skinny chickens with feet. I turned on the automatic rice cooker when I heard Philomena's key in the door. We made love when she returned home, and sometimes again after we had rolled out the futon for the night. We were always screwing in those days. Jesus, it was wonderful. Then we moved to New York, which is to monogamy what the channel changer is to linear narrative.

CELEBRITY SEARCHES

I CALL Celebrity Searches. "Can you give me a current location on Ralston, Chip?"

"Still checking," the voice says after a long wait. Finally: "We show him in his Malibu house up until Thursday last week, then we pick him up last Saturday at the Westin St. Francis hotel in San Francisco. Checked out Sunday and we're not showing anything since."

"Can you work on that for me?"

"Sure. Meantime, how about Kiefer Sutherland? He's right here in town."

"Who I really need to find is my girlfriend."

"Actress?"

"Model."

"Supermodel?"

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"Just model."

"Model, non super. Name?"

"Philomena Briggs."

After a search, he says she's not in their database.

FINALLY, A MESSAGE FROM PHIL

"Hi, it's me. You there? . . . Guess you're out. I'm rushing to get a plane. We're off to L.A. to finish up. I'm not sure about the schedule. It's nuts. Call you when I know where I am. Big kiss." This message on my machine when I return from dinner. It's the tone of voice which is so disturbing. A false, heightened breeziness. The words strung together on a thin wire of nervous gaiety.

COLLIN'S REACTION

THE narrator has been able to suppress his anxiety until this moment. But, hearing her voice, he knows that his suspicions were well founded.

Fruitlessly he dials the Château Marmont, the Sunset Marquis, the Four Seasons, the Bel-Air, the Bel Age, and the Peninsula. Maybe it's not too late. Maybe if he can reach her in L.A., he can stop her from doing what he fears she has already done. Between calls he searches all the drawers for cigarettes—which he gave up a year ago—and finally finds a pack of horrible stale Newports that someone left in the apartment. He lights one from the stove and thinks, Wait a minute, who smokes Newports? No one he knows. And Phil has never smoked. Jesus, she's been entertaining black guys in the apartment? No—wait, it could be a girl who smokes Newports. One of Phil's friends. What friends? Who *are* her friends? He realizes that Philomena has very few girlfriends. Suddenly it seems dangerous to have so few friends. Who is your boyfriend supposed to call when he can't find you? Collin remembers something his sister once said: "Beware the woman who doesn't like other women; she's probably generalizing from her own character."

FLASHBACK

"WHY don't we ask Katrinka and her boyfriend for dinner?"

"*You* ask them. The three of you can go out. Or better yet, just the two of you. You and Katrinka."

"I thought you liked Katrinka."

"I used to. Till I found out she was a liar."

"What did she lie about?"

"Lots of things."

"Like what?"

"Like she said you were coming on to her, trying to get her to meet you and stuff."

"She said that?"

"Uh-huh."

At this point Collin was hard pressed to speak up in Katrinka's defense. In fact, it had seemed to him that she was always flirtatious, and he had been aware at the time that he was not actively discouraging it. And so he did not really want to probe any deeper into the matter. And once again the two of them, Collin and Philomena, dined *à deux*.

PANIC

THE cigarette tastes so bad he immediately lights another one.

On a sudden inspiration, he rushes back to the bathroom and searches the cabinet beneath the sink, then the bedside table, then her lingerie drawer, scattering panties and bras to the winds. He looks under the bed, and in the soap dish in the shower, and finally admits that her diaphragm is not in the apartment.

Collin dials his sister Brooke. Perhaps he hopes she will convince him that his fears are groundless.

She can only say she is sorry, though her concern is genuine enough to provide a momentary balm.

"I sit down," he says. "Then I stand up, and if I could I'd climb the goddam walls and hang from the ceiling, but that wouldn't be any good, either. I don't want to be in the apartment another minute, but I don't want to leave in case she calls, and I don't want to be alone, but I can't think of anybody I could stand to be with, and I can't stand myself."

"Why don't you come over here?" Brooke proposes. Mercifully, she does not remind him that there are people far worse off than he. Until recently she was doing postgraduate work in quantum physics at the Rockefeller University, but she is on an extended hiatus, crippled by

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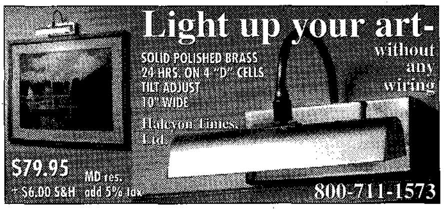

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depression and an acute sensitivity to human suffering. She still has nightmares about Bosnia. Collin's sister is like one of those bubble children who is born with a defective immune system; she does not possess that protective membrane which filters out the noise and pain of other creatures. She is utterly porous. She told him recently that the average weight loss among adult residents of Sarajevo after seven hundred days of siege was twenty-five pounds, thereby giving her own dietary habits a symbolic dimension, but she's been starving herself on and off since the Vietnam War.

When Collin reaches his sister's apartment and sees her face, he comes apart like a three-dollar umbrella in a gale. Brooke scoops up the wrecked steel ribs and shredded black nylon and walks the whole mess inside.

When Collin has regained his composure, she is boiling water in the former coat closet that passes as a kitchen.

"I didn't know you knew how to boil water," he says.

"You're thinking of Mom," she says. "I learned this in prep school. Actually, it's not as difficult as it looks."

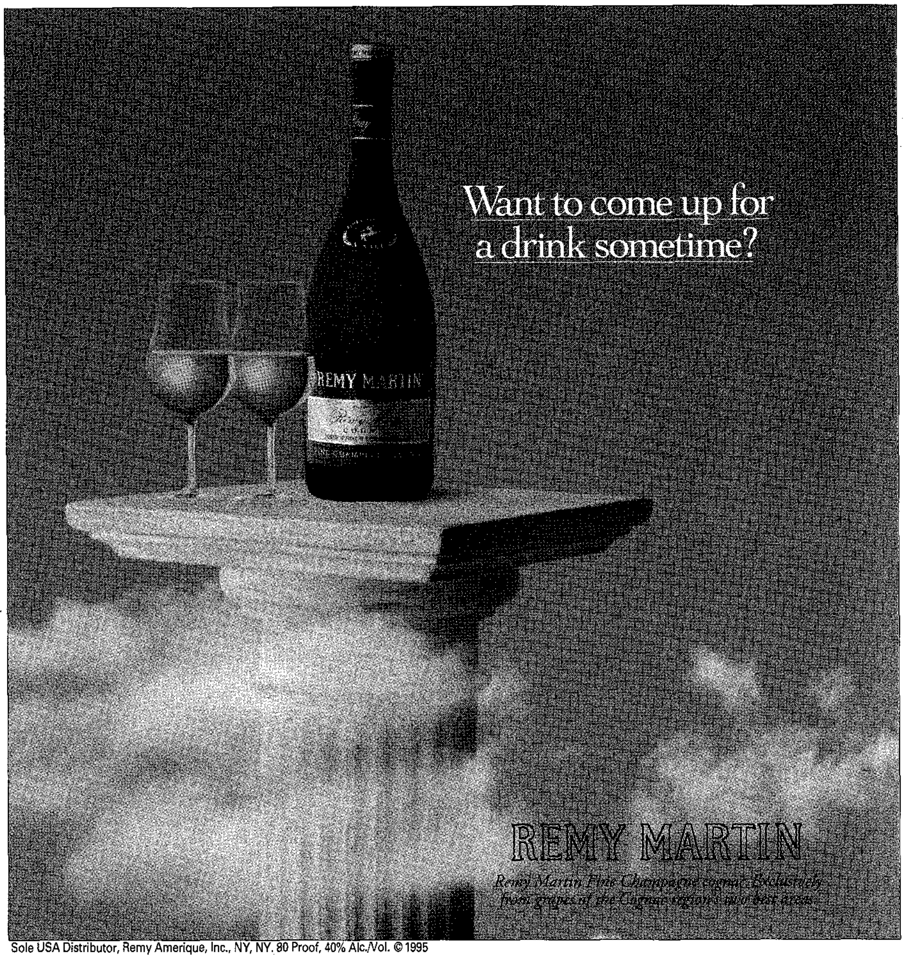
"Just please don't say I'm better off without her."

"Only because it would arouse your chivalrous instincts. I have no desire to provoke you into defending her." She looks like the poster child for anorexia, in the oversized Middlebury sweatshirt that Collin gave her about twelve years ago, with her hair swept back in a ponytail, her thin, freckled hand resting on the handle of the kettle. If only he were allowed to fall in love with his sister, maybe they could save each other.

"She took her diaphragm, Brooke."

Brooke sighs, nods gravely. "Could it be she was just anticipating the possibility that her plane might go down, stranding her in a remote snowbound region with five or six male survivors who might force her to have sex? And, thoughtfully, she didn't want to be pregnant with some nameless homunculus when the snow finally melted and she was at last rescued and reunited with you, her only true love?"

"What about disease, for Christ's sake? If she was so concerned about me,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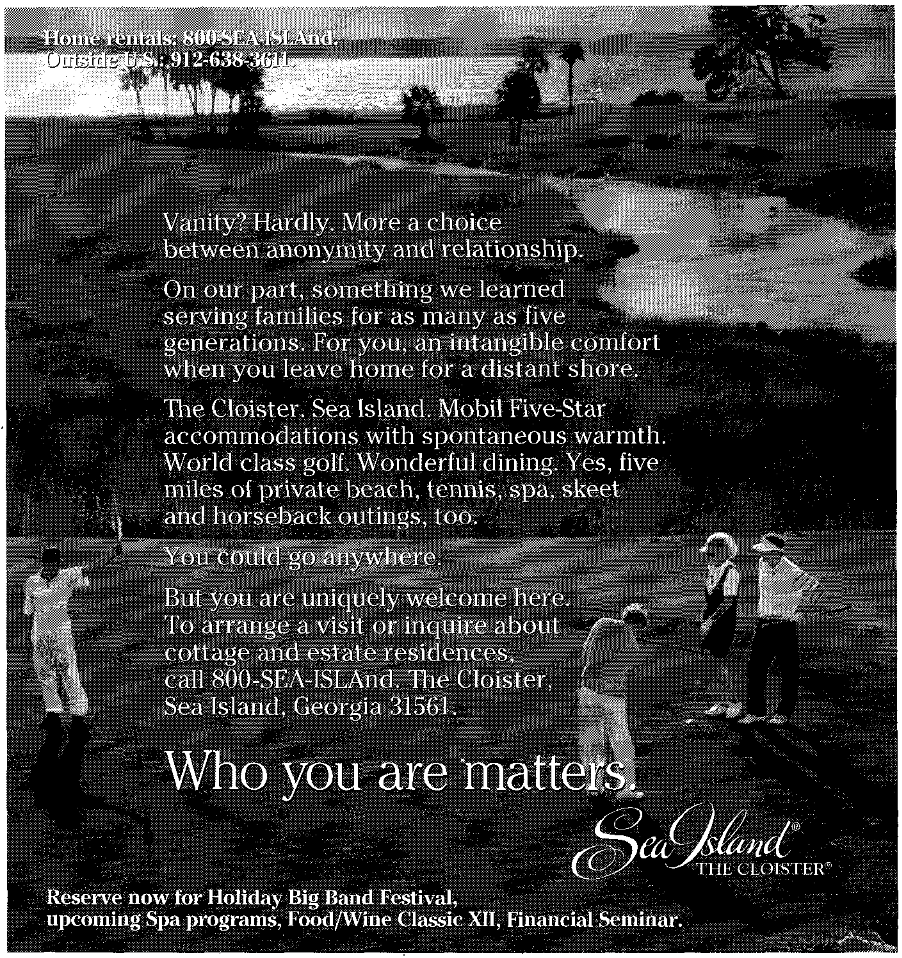
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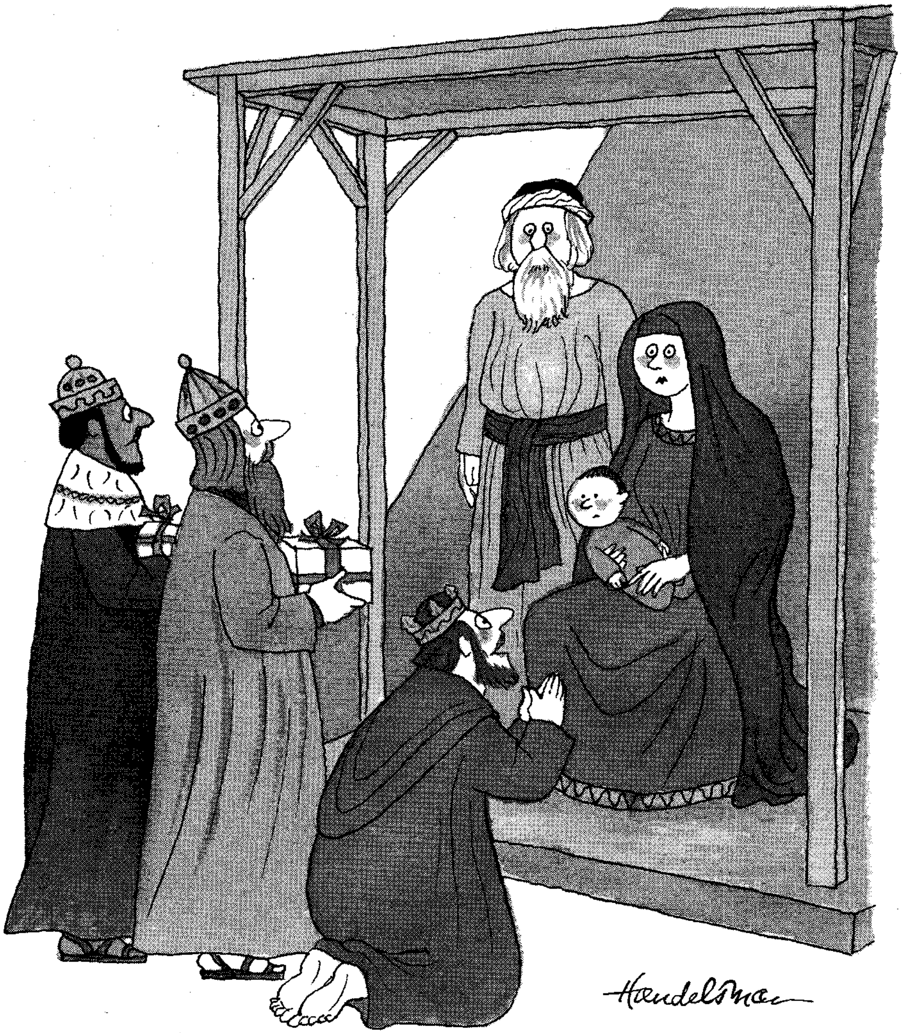

"We bring gold and frankincense. The myrrh is in the mail."

• •

she could have carried a gross of triple-strength condoms."

"It's possible she packed those, too. God, you smell like Lynchburg, Tennessee."

"I've been drinking."

"I'm shocked."

"It doesn't help."

"I wish you'd tell that to Dad."

She hands him a Beethoven mug full of steaming water floating a green herbal-tea bag. Collin slaps his hand against the wall. "I don't understand how she could be so eager to run off and fuck some other guy when I have to beg to get it once a week. It's not fair."

"I know."

A PARABLE

LATER, Brooke strokes her brother's hair. "Remember how we could never get Rogue to eat his dog food? Remember the only thing that would get Rogue to eat? Clio. As soon as she stuck her whiskers in his bowl, he went wild. He'd bark and growl and run in circles around the bowl till she'd had her nibble, and then he'd rush in and devour every last bit of it."

Collin takes the point, but is too unhappy to acknowledge it.

"When I talked to you in August, you said you supposed that you should get married but that *you* didn't really want to. Hardly the stuff of sonnets and *chansons*. But now that someone's got his nose in your bowl you're howling. I hate to say it, but this is a guy thing. You boys think you want virgins, but what you really want is to put your peepees where the other peepees have been."

"Why can't I just marry you?" Collin asks.

A CALL FROM MOM

"HI, honey. How's every little thing with you?" The annual parental Manhattan pilgrimage commences the day after tomorrow.

"Swell," I say. Mom has such a dreamy and ethereal disposition that I try not to puncture the bubble. The last, miraculous child of ancient parents, she grew up in an atmosphere of benign and privileged neglect in Charleston, then wafted through Bennington, till my father brought her to ground, briefly, after a mixer at Williams. When Dad graduated, a few months later, they married and moved into my paternal grandfather's house in Florida, where Mom resumed the life she had led as a child—painting landscapes, tending the garden, and riding. One hates to worry her.

"What do you want for Christmas?" she asks. I can't think of anything I want from central Florida, except maybe a lemon to suck on.

"Just your own sweet self," I say, pouring myself another drink.

A TYPICAL MORNING IN THE WEST VILLAGE

10 A.M.: Collin wakes. Headache. Remembers that Philomena has abandoned him and is waking with someone else. Heartache. Back to sleep.

11:15: Wakes again. Realizes that Philomena is still gone. Guilt at sleeping so late. Crawls out of bed. Surveys disorderly, depraved bedroomscape. Vows to clean up bedroom. Soon.

11:20: Showers. No shampoo. No soap. No toilet paper. Mental note to buy some. Files it next to yesterday's identical mental note.

11:45: Newsstand for the *Times* and the *Post*. The *Times* because Collin is a serious guy and the *Post* because he's not.

11:48 A.M.-12:30 P.M.: Bus Stop Coffee Shop, consuming coffee, bagel, and newsprint. Peace talks in Dayton. Anna Nicole Smith redundantly in a coma. Whitney threatens to dump Bobby Brown unless he stays at the Betty Ford Clinic.

12:48: At his desk examining mail:

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"Just checking."

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Gay Men's Health Crisis, Amnesty International, second notice from the phone company, already ten days overdue, and—what's this?—a chain letter received about a week ago:

CHAIN LETTER

> WITH LOVE ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE
>
> This paper has been sent to you for good luck. The original is in New England. It has been around the world nine times. You will receive good luck within four days of receiving this letter provided you send it on. This is no joke. Do not send money, faith has no price.
>
> Do not keep this letter. It must leave your hands within 96 hours. An R.A.F. Officer received $470,000. Jon Eliot received $40,000 and lost it because he broke the chain. While in the Philippines, George Hish lost his wife 51 days after receiving the letter. He had failed to circulate the letter. However, before her death he had received $7,775,000.00.
>
> Please send 20 copies. After a few days you will get a surprise. This is true even if you are not superstitious. Do note the following: Constantine Dias received the chain in 1953. He asked his secretary to make 20 copies and send them. A few days later he won the lottery of two million dollars.
>
> Dolan Fairchild received the letter and not believing, he threw the letter away. Nine days later he died.
>
> Do not ignore this. It works.

The letter is signed "St. Jude."

Is this the source of Collin's calamity? He broke the chain? What if he had made twenty copies and mailed them out last week? This shrill imperative improbably strikes home. In his bereaved, pathetic, tenderized state Collin is almost prepared to believe in the capricious and personalized fate assigned to him by this otherwise innocent-looking piece of Xerox paper. "Collin McNab left the letter sitting on his desk. A week after he received it his girlfriend packed up her diaphragm and disappeared. Two weeks later he was run over by a taxicab." Maybe it's not too late. Maybe if he sent it out now . . .

1:43: Calls Chip Ralston's manager in L.A. Secretary puts him on hold. And then over the receiver come the unendurable strains of Rod Stewart's "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?" After Collin has listened to the song four times, a voice breaks in.

"Collin, how are you? Where are you, in New York? How's the weather? Snowing yet? Sleet? Seventy-eight degrees and sunny here. So how's it going with Mr. Chip? You guys hitting it off O.K.?"

He explains that it's not going, that he can't locate the great thespian of his generation, that his deadline is less than a week away and he hasn't even talked to his alleged subject. Ralston's manager evinces surprise and dismay. He explains that Chip has been terribly busy researching his new role, but he, the manager, will absolutely have Chip call him today. Tomorrow at the latest.

1:45: Shuffles to the newsstand for a pack of Seven Star. He hasn't really started smoking again, just a temporary thing till he gets through this crisis. It comes back to him, though, no question. Inhale, exhale. Like riding a bike. Suddenly worried he might be missing a phone call from Philomena. Hurries back.

1:51 P.M.: No messages.

2:13 P.M.: An interlude of self-disgust, Collin wallows in shame at the sheer worthlessness of his life. All around him the city hums with purposive activity and commerce while he sinks into a slough of sloth and despond. His life has no purpose and no direction. No wonder Philomena has left him.

CHAIN LETTER, CONT.

Collin McNab left the letter sitting on his desk. A week after he received it his girlfriend packed up her diaphragm and disappeared. Two weeks later Collin discovered the letter. He sent out 20 copies and his girlfriend returned and said she loved him. It seems she had been hit by a taxicab in a foreign city and suffered a case of amnesia. The day after her boyfriend mailed this letter, she regained her memory and came home. The next day, Collin found a paper bag on the street containing $2,830,520 in cash. They were married a week later and now divide their time between St. Barts and Aspen.

MISCEGENATION SPECULATION

At last something Collin can use: the first high-profile marriage of a Hollywood sex goddess to a Japanese billionaire. Thinking that this particular prospect nicely combines Collin's underutilized background in Japanese studies with his beat as celebrity chronicler, he tries to interest Jillian Crowe in an essay on this subject. Shades on top of her head, she asks, "Collin, darling, honestly, do I look like the editor of *The New York Review of Books* to you?"

THE PARENTS COME TO TOWN, BUT FIRST . . .

Just leaving the apartment to meet my makers when I hear Philomena's voice on the machine: "Me. You there? Guess not." Sounding none too eager to find otherwise.

As rapidly as any gunfighter ever unholstered a Colt Peacemaker, I snatch the receiver from its cradle. "Where are you?"

The silence lasts long enough for me to fear I have lost her. "That doesn't really matter."

"Please come home."

"I need some time to think."

"You've already taken the better part of a week. Phil, what are you doing? Where are you?" God, my voice sounds pathetic, tremulous, quavering between tenor and falsetto.

"Things haven't been so great with us lately."

"I'll be better. I'll be so good you'll think I'm someone else. I'll be so sensitive you'll think I'm a girl. Shit. I mean *woman*."

"Look, I've got to go."

"Who are you with?" I demand, desperately changing modes.

"I'm not with anybody." The rhythm and tone of this response are all wrong. I don't need a polygraph to confirm my suspicions.

"Why did you take your diaphragm?" I ask. "Who are you fucking while you're taking all this contemplative Virginia Woolf 'A Room of One's Own' time to think?"

"Goodbye, Collin. I'll call in a few days."

"My parents are coming to town," I say lamely. As a logical fallacy this, I believe, is called appeal to false authority.

"Say hi for me."

And she's gone. It's impossible to present your best self—attractive, assured, and desirable—when you are insane.

DEUS EX MACHINA

Not to be fooled twice, I go to the Spy store on Second Avenue to purchase one of those handy devices that

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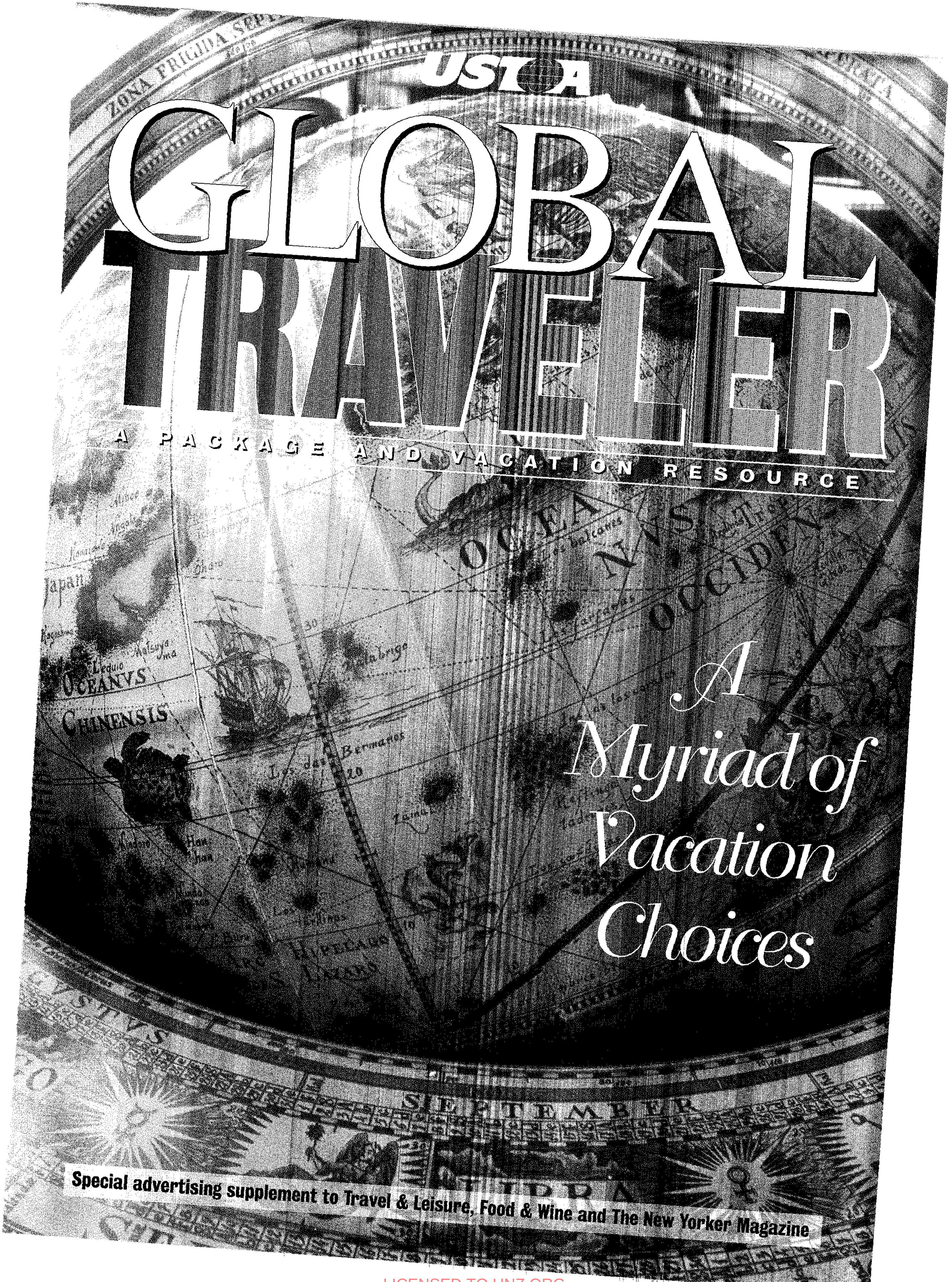
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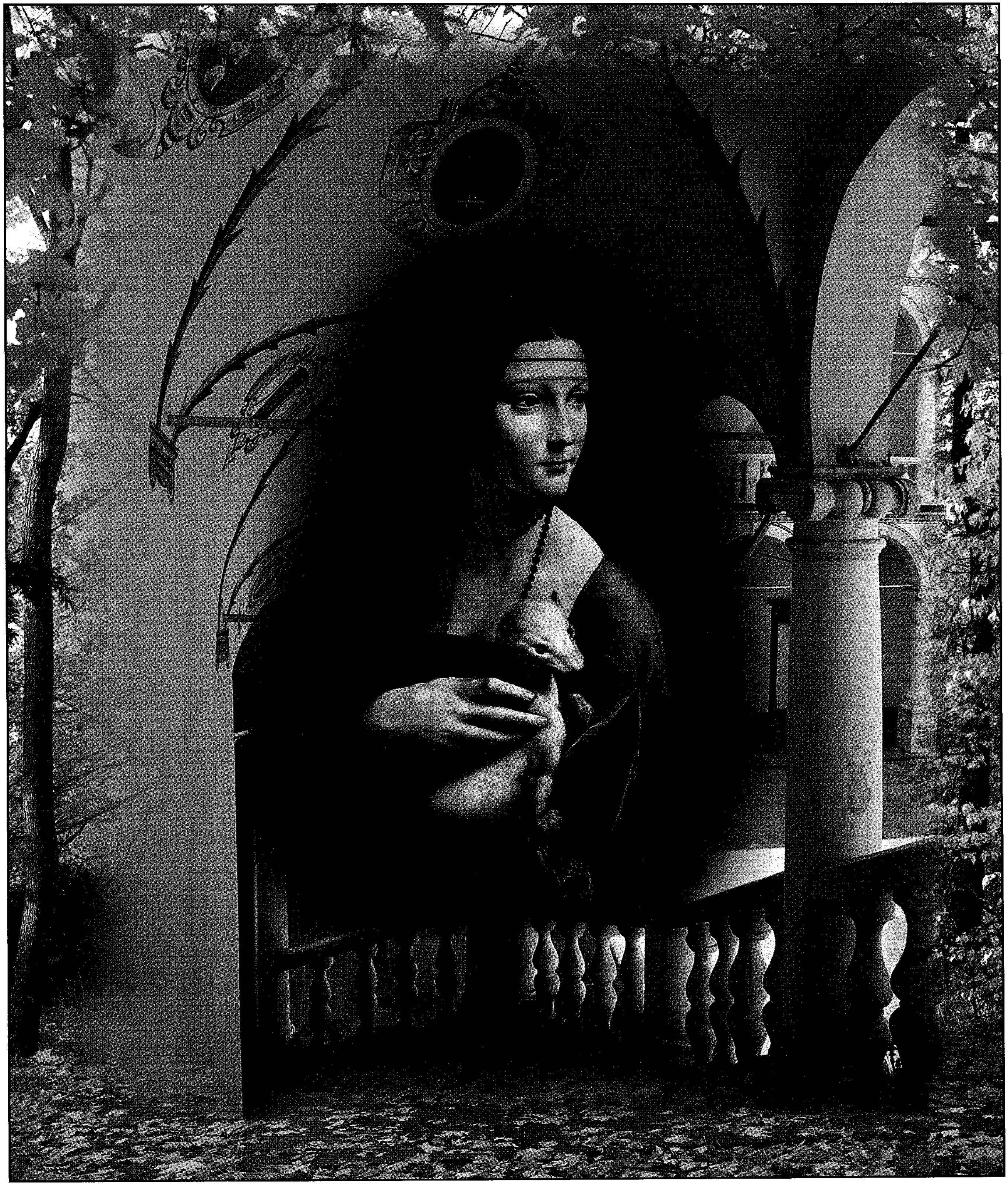

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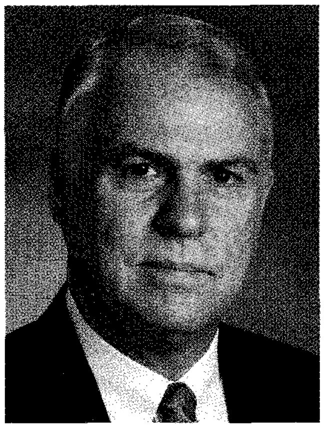

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I am interested in knowing more about the following destinations: ______________________

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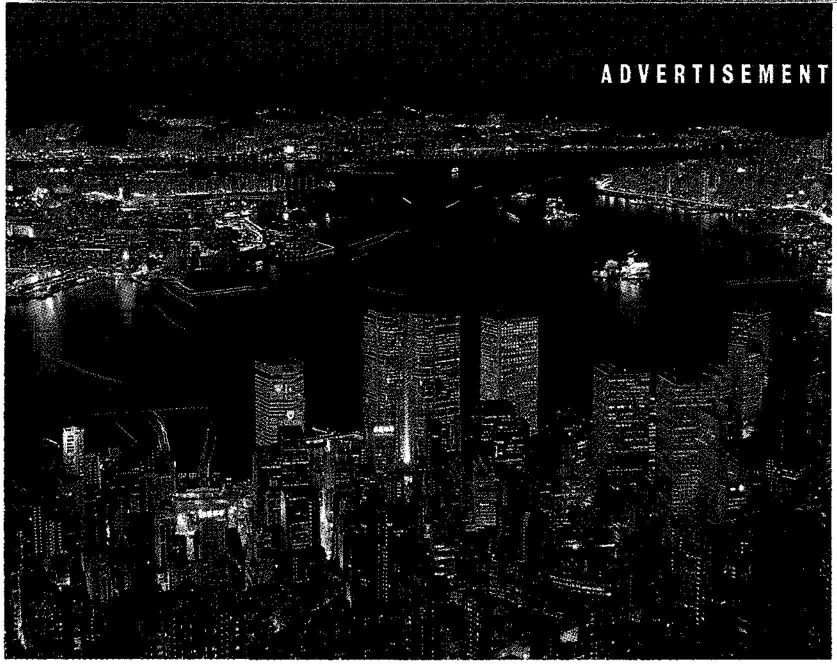


Today's Tour Packages

Variety, Flexibility, Savings, And Expertise

First, forget the movie.

It was called "If It's Tuesday, It Must Be Belgium" — a frolicking 1969 farce following a frenetic motorcoach tour of Europe. Funny flick — but fiction.

Imagine instead a much more civilized picture: an elegant Hemingway-style safari hosted by a famous archeologist or a rail trip of Mexico's Copper Canyon in a luxurious private rail car. Seeking something adventurous? How about heli-exploring in the Canadian Rockies. Something entertaining? A fun-filled motorcoach trip to country music capital Branson, Missouri, perhaps? Looking for a great deal? That weekend getaway to London or Orlando family vacation may cost far less than you think.

Today's tour packages offer variety, flexibility, expertise and substantial savings. You can travel independently — on your own, at your own speed — while enjoying the savings of group purchasing power. You can assemble your own itinerary or follow one prepared for you. You can enjoy expert guidance through the world's most remote and pristine regions. And yes, you can take a motorcoach across Europe — hassle-free, at a leisurely pace, with plenty of private time.

"Americans have become more sophisticated in their travel choices, and in many cases more interested in preserving their independence," says Bob Whitley, president of the United States Tour Operators Association. "The products the tour industry offers have evolved right along with them."

Today, says Whitley, "You can go anywhere in the world on a package, traveling in any style you choose. There's virtually no travel arrangement that's not available through a tour operator, and at substantial savings."

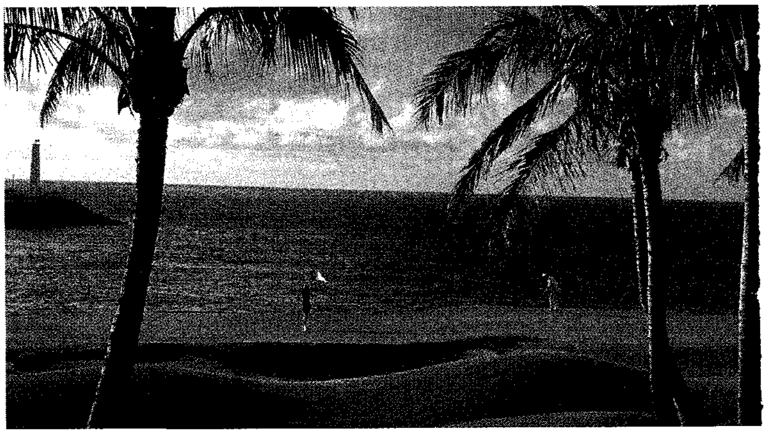
How do they do it? Volume. The USTOA's 43 member companies, the world's leading tour operators, served 5.6 million travelers spending $3.6 billion last year. Those numbers translate into serious bargaining power with airlines, hotels, rent-a-car firms and other travel service providers the world over. Compared to a self-arranged trip identical in every other respect, packages commonly cut costs by more than 25 percent.

"People still think they can contact the hotel directly through its 800 number and get a better deal," says Allen Stolz, CEO of Jet Vacations, a longtime USTOA member. "You won't. You'll get a better deal from the tour operator, for sure. And that's true for every element of the trip, from airfare to rental cars to sightseeing admissions."

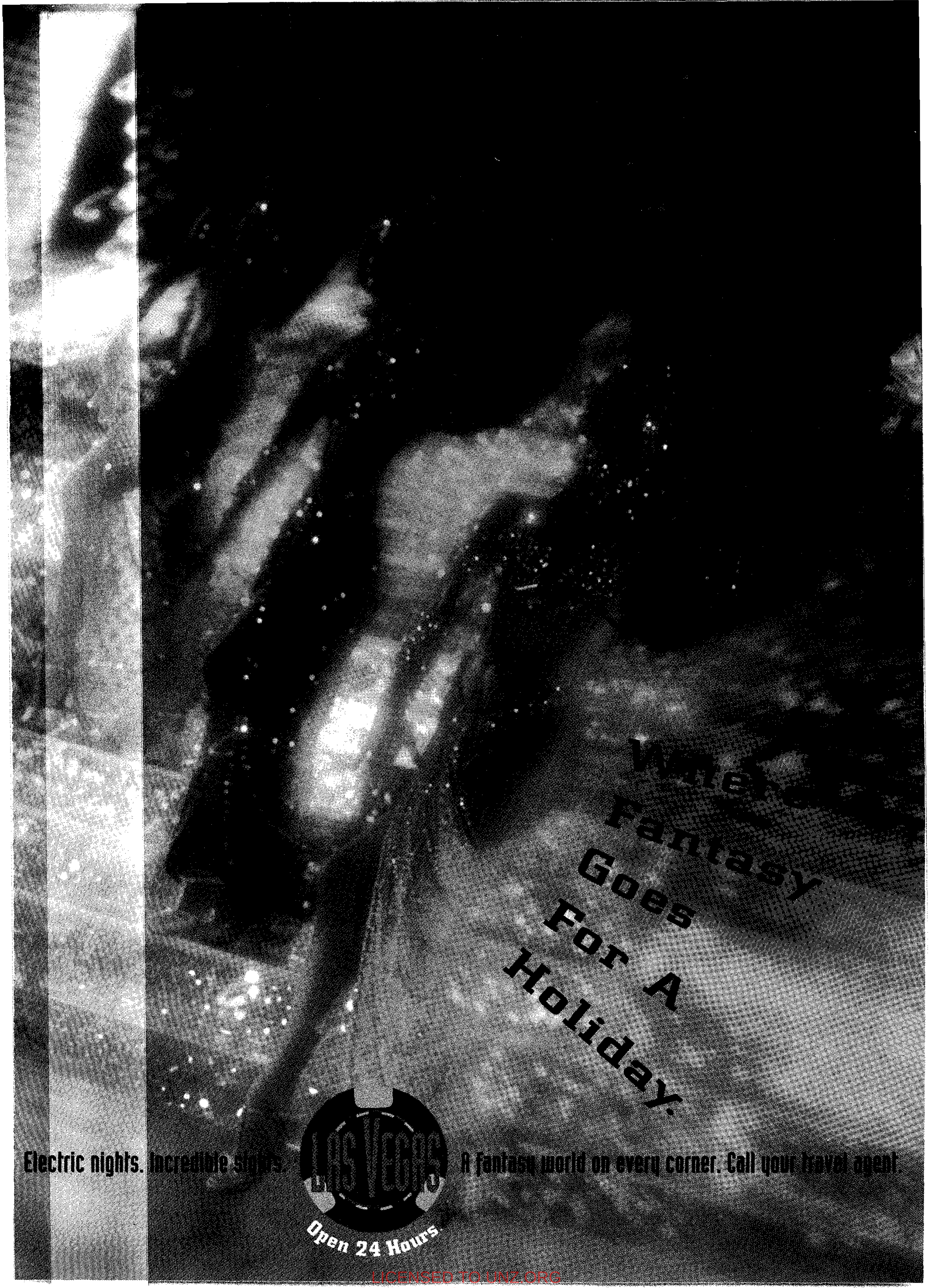
AVOID PITFALLS

The set cost of a package helps avoid the pricey pitfalls that bedevil every traveler. "Tourists are incredible targets for the most extraordinary nonsense," says Sven-Olof Lindblad of New York-based Special Expeditions. "A person traveling on his own, unless he's extraordinarily savvy, is going to be taken in one form or another, left, right and center, in most parts of the world. This absolutely minimizes it."

But more than savings make the tour products. Americans today are working harder than ever; we often have less time to commit to planning a trip,



Striking sights—Hong Kong's skyline, top; Place Condorde-Paris, bottom left; Golfing in Hawaii, bottom right.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even while our vacations have become all the more precious. Tour products, chosen with the counsel of a travel agent, offer the benefits of fault-free planning and anxiety-free vacationing.

And, there's also comfort in knowing your arrangements will stick. "If your hotel is overbooked and you're Joe Blow, that's just too bad," notes Heinz Niederhoff, president of DER Tours in Los Angeles. "But if you're carrying the voucher of a tour operator they do a lot of business with, you're going to get the accommodation you've been promised. You have the power of the tour operator behind you."

That power shows up in another way: availability. For choice dates, many popular destinations are booked solid months in advance. "Many times you simply can't get to the destination because there's no space available — but the tour operator has block space," explains Whitley.

Flexibility is the byword of today's tour operators. "Our programs are like restaurant menus, all a la carte," says Stolz. "You can mix and match and do what you want to do. If you want to have no appetizer, an entree and three desserts, you've got it. It's one-stop shopping."

Most importantly, "You want an established, reputable company to deal with — it's absolutely critical," says Niederhoff. One way to assure that is to select a member of the 23-year-old United States Tour Operators Association. Qualifications are stringent: Applicants must have at least three years in business; they need at least 18 references; the sponsorship of at least two current members; and the financial wherewithal to participate in the USTOA's $1 million Consumer Protection Program.

Compare The Savings

Australian Fling: Ten days-nine nights
International airfare Los Angeles to Cairns, Sydney to Los Angeles; domestic airfare Cairns to Sydney; seven nights' hotel, sightseeing, Barrier Reef cruise, transfer, nine meals.
Package Price: $1,949
Do-It-Yourself: $2,235
Savings: $286

China Shopping Spree: Seven days-five nights
Roundtrip air from San Francisco; five nights' hotel; daily breakfast; Peking Duck banquet; two days' sightseeing; guided shopping tours; airport transfers.
Package Price: $1,190
Do-It-Yourself: $2,032
Savings: $842

Branson, Missouri: Five days-four nights
Motorcoach transportation, most meals, five shows, gambling cruise, hotel taxes, tips and applicable room service charges.
Package Price: $573
Do-It-Yourself: $695.62
Savings: $122.62

London Shilling Saver: Five days-five nights
Roundtrip air from New York to London; five nights in tourist class hotel; continental breakfast daily; hotel taxes and service charges.
Package Price: $589
Do-It-Yourself: $768
Savings: $179

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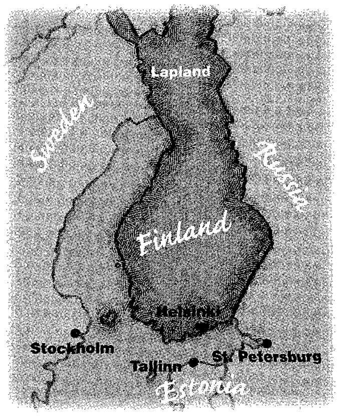

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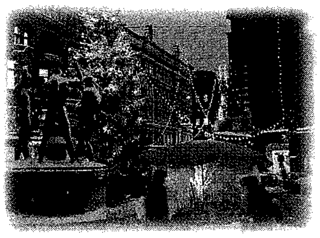

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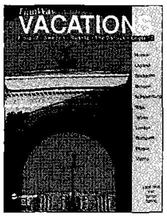

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Grand Canadian Rockies. 11 days from $2465 including Vancouver, Victoria plus an overnight rail journey to Jasper National Park, Banff and Lake Louise. This tour includes travel by train, deluxe motorcoach, ferry steamers & float planes. Meal plan included. Tauck Tours.

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Ottawa, Toronto & Niagara Falls. 5 days from $549 including Parliament Hill, Rideau Canal, Supreme Court, 1000 Islands, Floral Clock & Minolta Tower. Includes 8 meals. Collette Tours.

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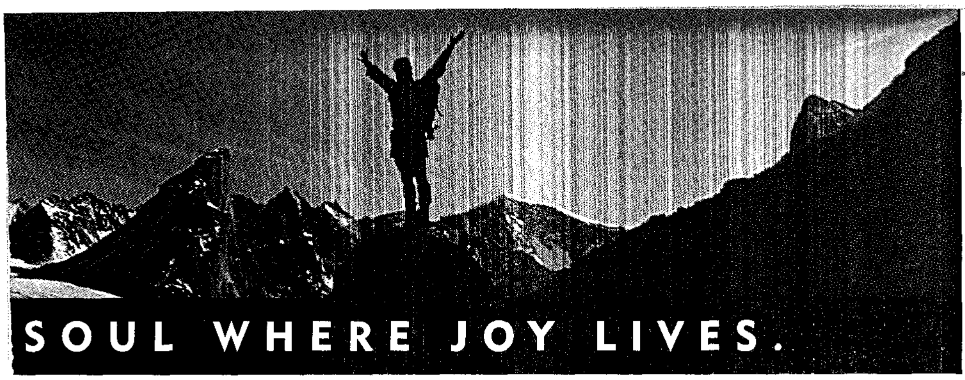
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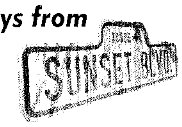
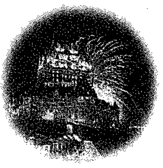


Toronto Theatre & Niagara Falls. 5 days from $689 including 2 live theatre performances in Toronto & touring in Niagara Falls. Includes 2 dinners. Mayflower Tours.

Montréal & Québec. 6 days from $469 including Québec City, Manoir Richelieu Hotel, St. Anne de Beaupré, Notre Dame Cathedral, St. Joseph's Oratory & Le Festin du Gouverneur. Includes 8 meals. Collette Tours.

Cruise - St. Lawrence River. 8 days from $2075 including deluxe small-ship cruising and touring the Thousand Islands, Ottawa, Montréal & Québec. Meal plan included. Tauck Tours.

Ontario & French Canada. 9 days escorted including Toronto, Ottawa, Québec City & Montréal. Scenic highlights of Niagara Parkway and Floral Clock. Cosmos.



Leisurely Ontario & Québec. 9 days escorted including Toronto, Ottawa, Québec City & Montréal. Plus Maid of the Mist cruise at Niagara Falls. Globus.

Québec's Romantic Gaspé. 13 days escorted including visits to Bar Harbour, Campobello Island, Matane & Tadoussac. Includes a whale watching cruise across the St. Lawrence River. Globus.

Romantic Gaspé. 14 days for $2160 including French Canada and New England. Tour the Gaspé Peninsula, cruise to Bonaventure Island & whale watch in the Saguenay River plus Québec City. Meal plan included. Tauck Tours.

Eastern USA & Canadian Classic. 14 days from $2275 including tours of Québec City, Ottawa, Montréal, Toronto, visit Niagara Falls & Maid of the Mist cruise. Meal plan included. APT International Tours.

THE EAST COAST

Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island. 8 days from $799 including Acadia National Park, Bar Harbour, Halifax, Peggy's Cove, Prince Edward Island & St. Andrews by the Sea. Includes 14 meals. Collette Tours.

Nova Scotia Fling. 8 days for $1149 and includes tours of Halifax, Fundy National Park, Prince Edward Island & the Cabot Trail. Brendan Tours.

Nova Scotia Fling. 8 days from $1149 including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick & Prince Edward Island. 9 meals. Mayflower Tours.

Atlantic Canada. 8 days for $1595 including round-trip airfare from New York plus a tour of Halifax, Peggy's Cove, Saint John & Prince Edward Island with Green Gables and Charlottetown. Meal plan included. Tauck Tours.

Atlantic Canada Adventure. 11 days escorted including a tour of Charlottetown, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island National Park, Halifax & the Fisheries Museum. Cruise from Yarmouth to Bar Harbour. Cosmos.

Canadian Maritime Explorer. 12 days escorted including a tour of Halifax, Sherbrooke Village & the Alexander Graham Bell Museum. Overnight cruise aboard the Scotia Prince. Globus.

Newfoundland & Labrador. 13 days escorted includes visits to Halifax, St. John's, Corner Brook, Plum Point, Grand Falls, Gander & Terra Nova National Park. Cosmos.

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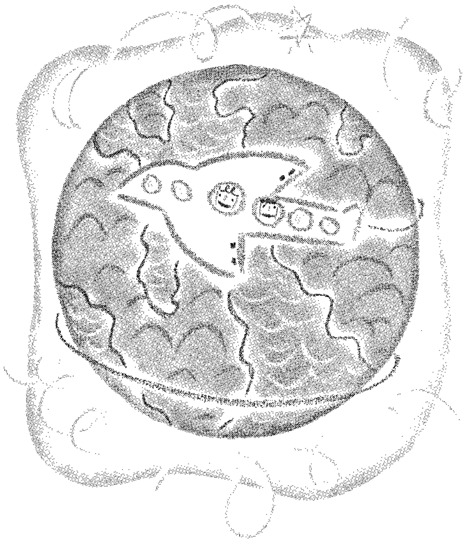
Choosing the right tour for you!

Will It Be Escorted, Independent, Package or Charter?



Escorted Tours Today's tour products can be categorized in four main groups: escorted, independent, package and charter. Escorted tours, the most traditional of tour products, share these elements: group travel, usually by motorcoach, a set itinerary, with lodging, activities and most meals included, a strong educational bent and a tour director to manage the trip.

"I think escorted tours include many, many more complements than do other things that are called tours. An escorted tour has integration; it has timing; it has style built into it. It is very carefully choreographed," said Arthur Tauck, CEO of Westport, Conn.-based Tauck Tours.

"What people discover is that the touring experience can be vastly enhanced by letting us do the work, and by sharing the experience with others of like-minded ideas," says John Stachnik, president of Mayflower Tours in Downers Grove, Ill.

And, "There is substantial time built into the trip to do your own thing," assures Stachnik.

Independent Tours In a changing world of travel, perhaps the label "independent tour" is a bit of a misnomer. They're independent, to be sure. But it's a stretch to call them tours. There's no group on these trips, no guide or fixed itinerary, unless you want one. You pick where you want to go, book the components you want: air, hotel, car, attractions...with the advantage of group buying power.

"Flexibility is the word. It's the antithesis of the perception of a tour," says Ralph Caliri, president of Haddon Holidays in Mount Laurel, N.J. "We really don't sell tours. We sell components."

Modularity creates options."You can be as adventuresome as you want to be," says Allen Stolz, CEO of Jet Vacations in New York.

Packaged Tours For a perfect marriage of convenience and independence, millions of vacationers look to packaged tours. Like group tours, packages tend to have fixed itineraries, with ground transportation and hotels booked in advance. But like independent tours, there's no organized group: Clients are on their own, free to do as they please.

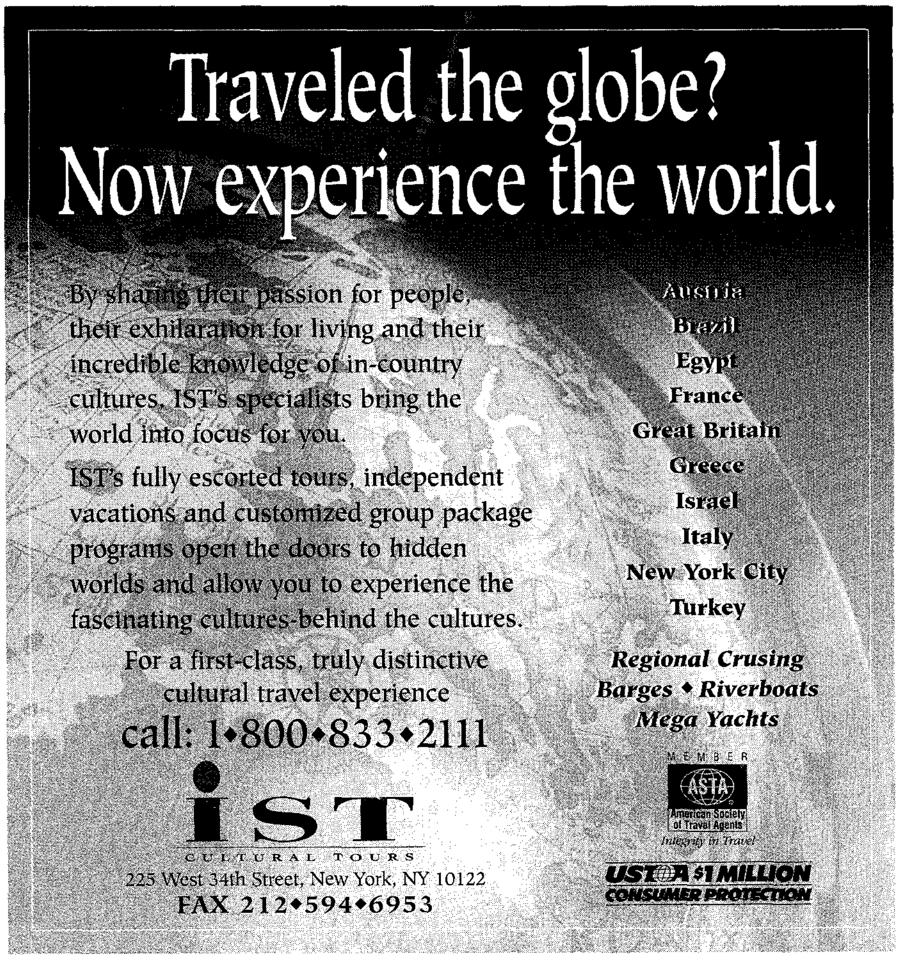
"You're traveling independently, but with the security of a pre-planned itinerary," says James Murphy of Brendan Tours in Van Nuys, Calif.

Charter Tours Looking to go to a popular destination at a peak period? Consider a charter tour. Thanks to improved federal regulations and a new generation of operators, air charters have gone prime-time. Unlike 20 years ago, charters have become the preferred way to reach many popular destinations.

It works simply: The tour operator rents an airplane and sells the seats, and perhaps hotel and ground components.

The savings are substantial. Charters can run 10 to 30 percent less expensive than regularly scheduled carriers, and without advance-purchase requirements.

Federal regulations are stringent. Charter operators must post $200,000 bonds, and they can't cancel flights less than 10 days out.



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USTOA's Consumer Protection Plan

Consumer protection: It is an important consideration in any major purchase decision. Because tour operators book and sell in great volume, they are sometimes vulnerable to sudden economic or political changes.

"It's a relatively rare occurrence, but we have seen instances in which tour operators have gone out of business because of some economic situation," says Bob Whitley, president of the United States Tour Operators Association. "Our organization's No. 1 priority is to make sure that when that happens, the consumer does not get stuck."

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PROTECTION

The USTOA acts in two ways. First, all its members are required to hold a minimum of $1 million in professional liability insurance, issued by an A or A+ rated insurance company, licensed in all 50 states and written on a worldwide basis.

Second, and most important, is the organization's $1 million Consumer Protection Plan. It requires each member to furnish cash, securities, an individual indemnity bond or an irrevocable, collateralized letter of credit in the amount of $1 million to the USTOA. If the firm fails, that money is available to reimburse all customers who have made payment for trips that are cancelled.

The USTOA also recommends vacationers obtain personal insurance to cover cancellation, baggage or medical evacuation. The cost is nominal, but the peace of mind is priceless.

A Travel Agent: Your Best Vacation Resource

It takes a seasoned guide to pick through the world of possibilities that make up the vacation options today— someone who knows products, providers and prices alike. Your local travel agent is eminently qualified to interpret your dreams, present your choices and help select the package that's right for you.

The agent does all the research, reads the fine print and you reap the benefit of his or her experience. An agent's services, moreover, come free of charge.

Here are five key questions to ask before booking a tour:

1. What's included in the price, and what's not?
2. Who's the tour operator and how long has it been in business? Is it a member of the United States Tour Operators Association?
3. What's the destination really like? What are the local sights? Ask to see pictures of the hotel and the area.
4. What are the money terms? When are deposits and payments required, and in the event your plans change, how much is refundable at what time? Is insurance available?
5. Finally, is the tour operator himself insured? You can make sure by choosing a USTOA member. All carry mandatory $1 million consumer protection coverage.

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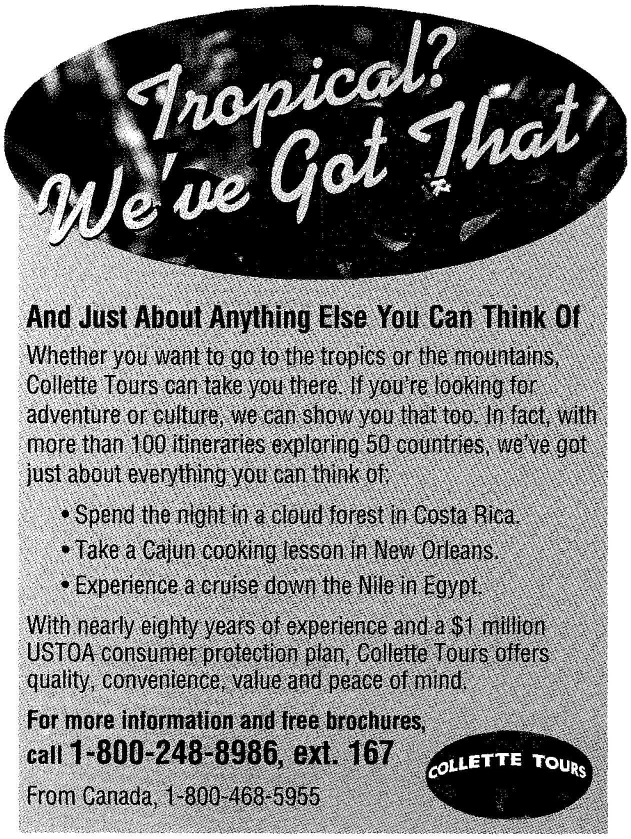

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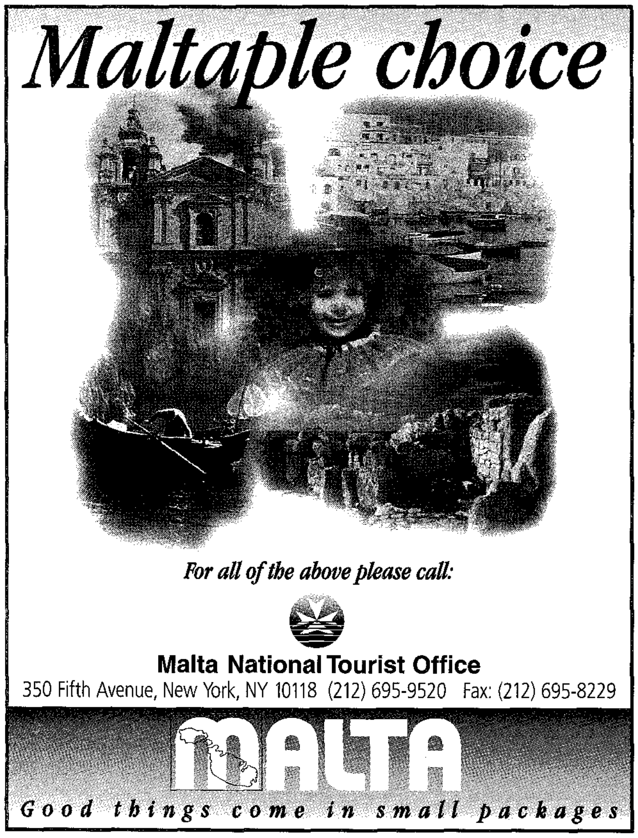

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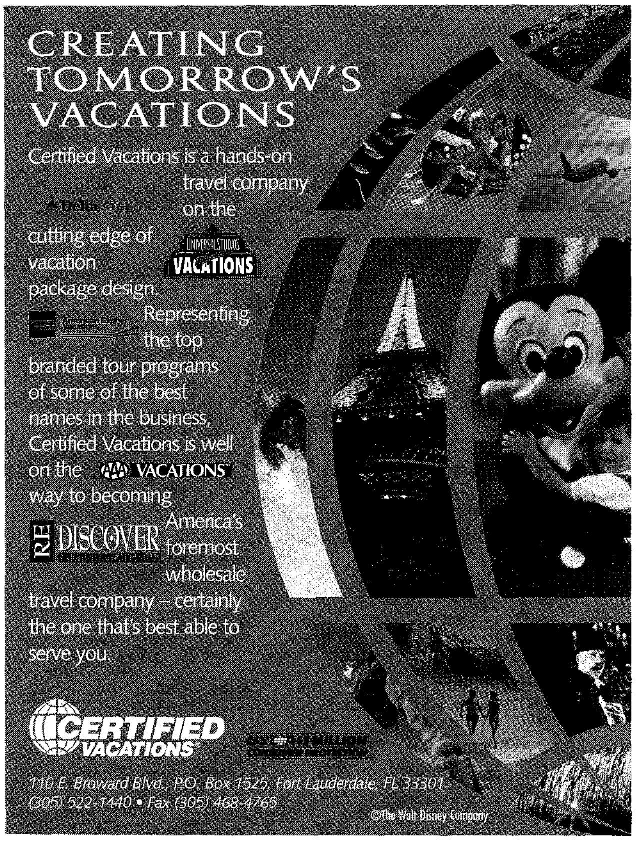

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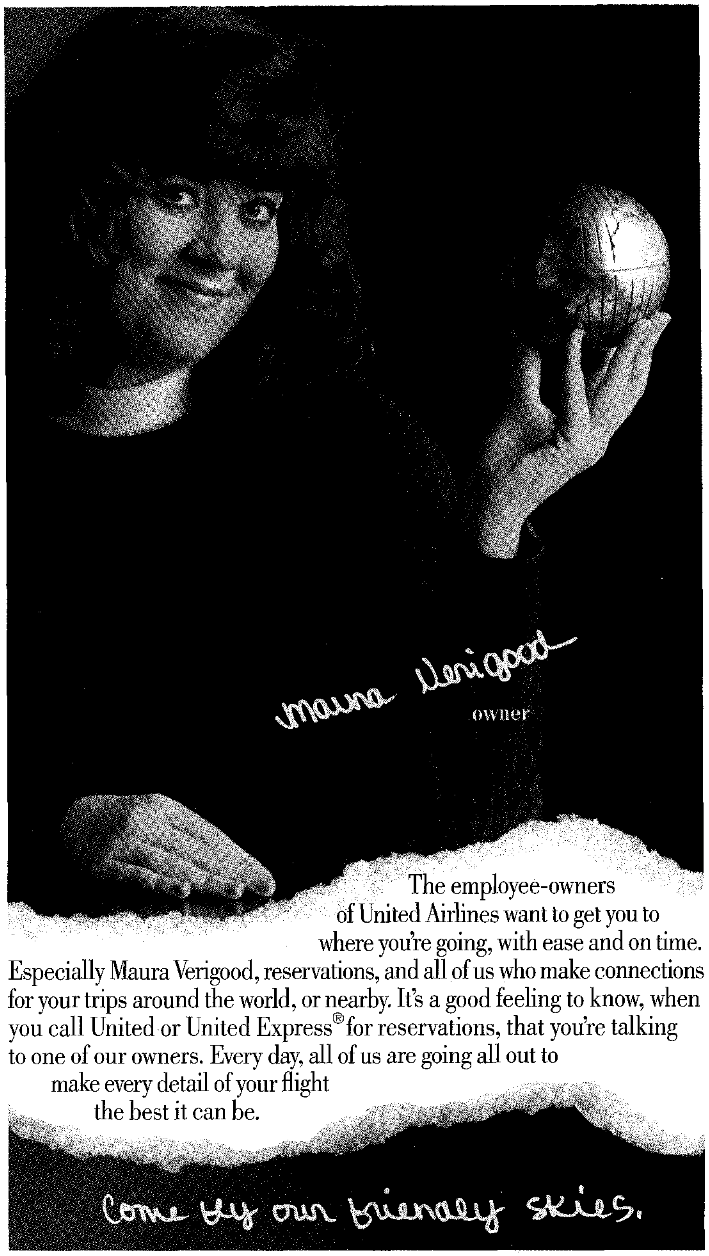
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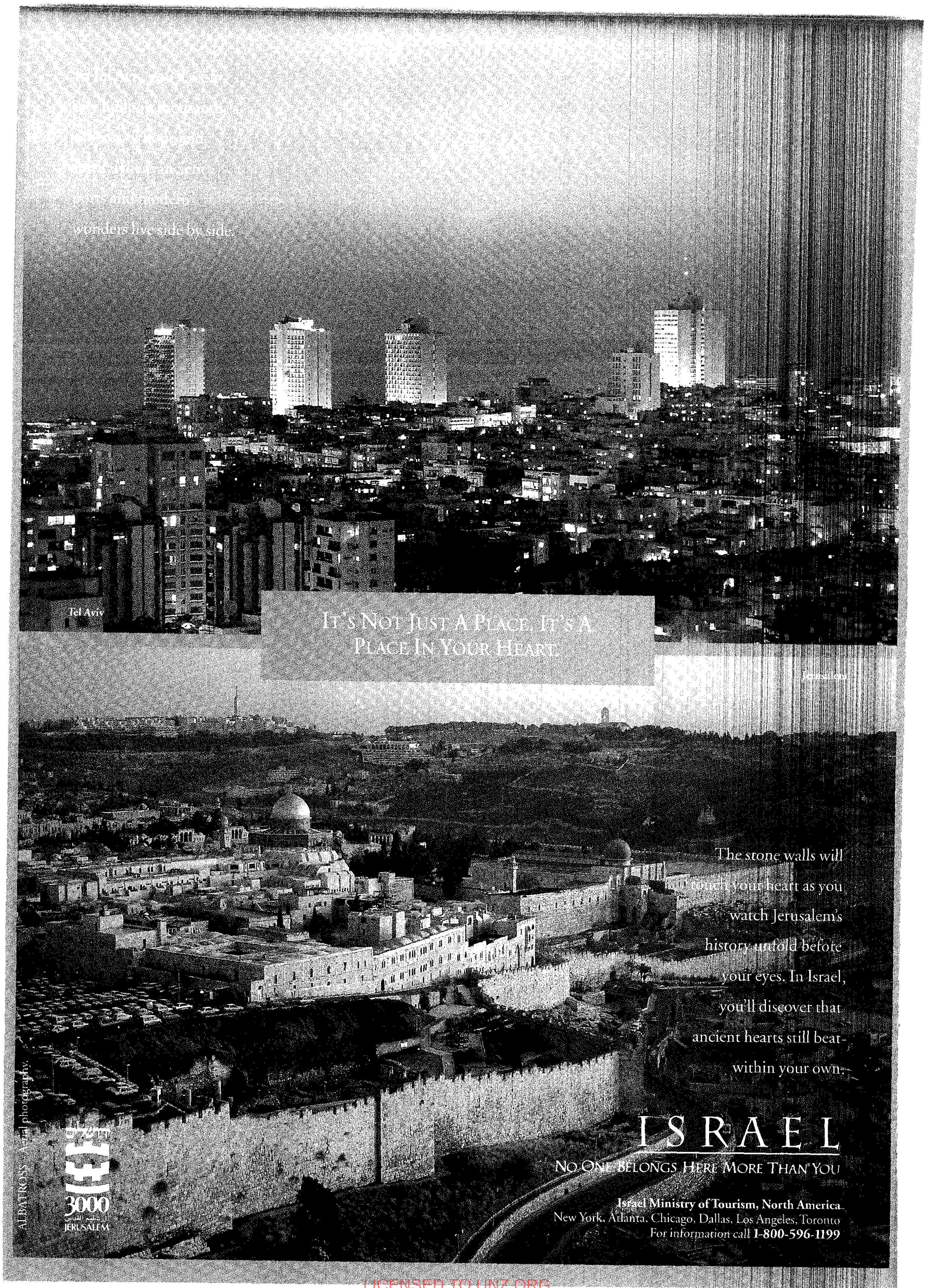
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tell you the phone numbers of incoming calls—something I have been meaning to acquire for a long time. Back at the apartment, I plug the little black box into my phone as per instructions and stare at it hopefully but discover that I still haven't figured out how to will Philomena to call me.

THANKSGIVING CHEER

RECENTLY, in the *Times*, Frank Prial wrestled with that perennial question: What wine to match with your Thanksgiving turkey and traditional fixings? Some say champagne, some Chardonnay. Frank leans toward zinfandel, and there's even a case to be made for a young Cabernet Sauvignon. Be advised that my father recommends Johnnie Walker Black.

We're having Thanksgiving dinner in the restaurant at the St. Regis. Traditionalists that we are, Mom and I are working on a bottle of champagne. My sister's current would-be consort, Doug Hawkin, M.D., is already throwing back the Diet Cokes like there's no tomorrow. He arrived before us, straight from the emergency room at New York Hospital. Mad Dog Doug is a trauma surgeon whose acquaintance Brooke made after she tumbled down a set of stairs at the Rockefeller University. Brooke is stoned and sipping mint tea, like the hippie she once was, glaring at her food.

"I find it difficult to give thanks," she mutters, "when so many people in the world are suffering tonight."

"Give thanks you're not one of them," says Dad, tucking into a fresh Scotch.

"In Ethiopia a family of four doesn't see this much protein in a month."

"You must see a great deal of suffering," Mom says to Doug. I still don't understand why he had to come. Doesn't he have his own fucked-up family to annoy?

TRAUMA THEORY AND PRACTICE

"IS there a special season," Mom continues, "or month or anything when you get more traumas than other times?"

Dad snuffles at this question—the nasal declaration of a man who never

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ceases to be amazed by the eccentricity of his wife.

“No, actually, that’s a good question,” says Doug, answering both Mom and the snort. “The full moon is the worst. Emergency rooms are always extremely frenetic the night of a full moon. I don’t know how to explain it scientifically, but the empirical evidence is fairly convincing. What’s easier to account for is that sick children, particularly from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, tend to be brought to the emergency room after 11 P.M.”

Mom looks happily perplexed. “And why is that?”

“Because that’s when prime-time television ends.”

“The children wait until after prime time to get sick?”

“I believe,” Dad says, “Brooke’s, uh, friend means that the *parents* wait until after their favorite shows before bringing the kids in.”

“That’s dreadful.” Mom turns to Doug. “Is that true?”

Doug nods sadly.

“The worst are the self-mutilators,” says Brooke, rising out of her marijuana-induced stupor to do a brief promotional spot for her beau. “Can you imagine having a ward full of desperately ill and injured people to tend to, and having to spend two hours on some guy who, tell them about the thing yesterday . . .”

“Well,” says Doug, “I wish I could say it was a unique case, but in fact we’ve seen it before. A patient arrived on the ward yesterday under his own power, clutching a towel to his groin. We estimate he lost more than thirty per cent of his blood.”

“Don’t tell me,” says Dad.

“Fortunately, I guess, he hadn’t fully severed his penis. He seems to have lost—”

“Stop!” Dad shouts. “Is this any kind of dinner-table conversation?”

I don’t know, I think I agree with my father, although I can’t help feeling a twinge of sympathy for Doug, the outsider.

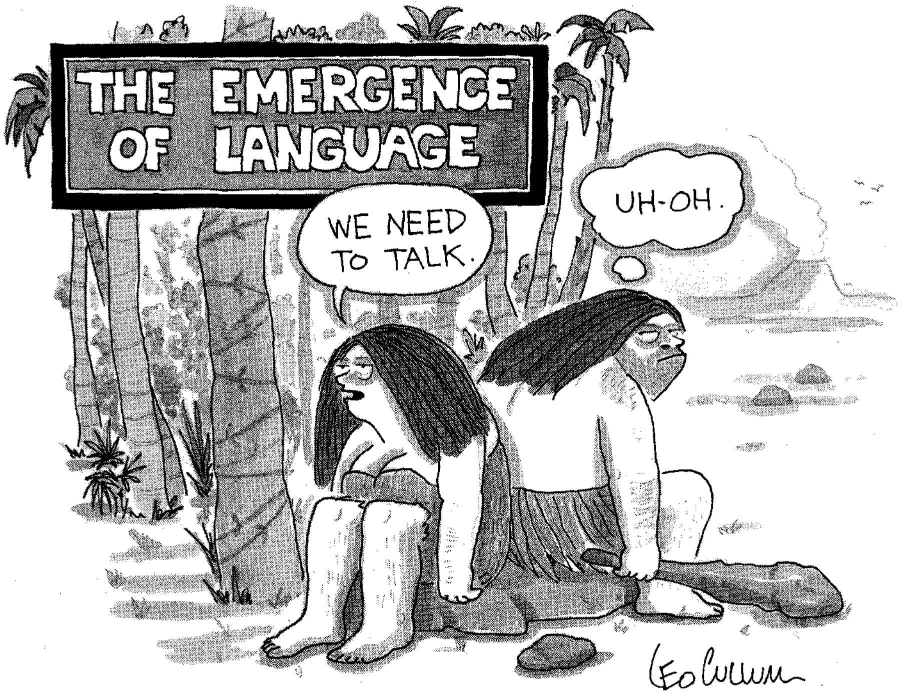
“Doug,” says Mom, “are you sure you wouldn’t like a *teeny* bit of champagne?”

MORE BEVERAGE NOTES

ONE factor that Frank Prial doesn’t take into account about holiday potables is their combustibility. When long-separated members of the same family are soaked in spirits and rubbed together, explosions almost inevitably result. This year it happens after I ask Mom how she met Dad. It’s a story I haven’t heard in years, certainly never with the kind of vivid dramatic detail she gives it this afternoon.

BOY MEETS GIRL, SPRING, 1955

“WE used to think Williams boys were so square,” she says, the stem of her champagne flute pinched lightly between age-spotted pointer and thumb. “And, of course, they were.”


THE EMERGENCE OF LANGUAGE
WE NEED TO TALK.
UH-OH.
Leo Cullum

A curmudgeonly harrumph from my father, still dressed in the square-college-boy uniform of his youth—blue blazer, blue oxford button-down shirt and regimental tie, his pink-pickled face unlined by the tussles of commerce or metaphysics.

“We used to think Bennington girls were artsy-fartsy dykes,” counters the former captain of the debating team.

“And the Williams boys were so very tolerant of diversity,” Mom continues, winking at us. “But we had to admit they were very good-looking.” She smiles sweetly at my father. Beneath the sun-and-nicotine-cured skin, she is still girlish, pale-blue eyes childishly bright, her hair long, just as she wore it at Bennington, the gold now ghosted with silver. “I drove down with Cassie Reymond and some other girls. Cassie was an actress, and she went to New York, and last I heard she was married to that actor who was in that wonderful play—what was it called—about the, it wasn’t with Richard Burton but somebody like that?” She looks hopefully at my father, who coughs impatiently into his hand.

“ ‘Camelot?’ ” proposes Doug.

Oh, *do* shut up, Doug.

Beside us, a Japanese family: father, mother, two solemn pre-teen daughters in severe white blouses and page-boy haircuts.

“Anyway, we got there, and it was awful, all these fierce, shy, hungry boys in their nice J. Press suits and their crewcuts, waiting to pounce. We drove down in Cassie’s car, thank God, but there was a bus that arrived from Smith or somewhere like that, someplace frilly and proper, maybe Holyoke, I don’t know. Anyway, this bus came just as we pulled in, and the boys were waiting outside it. They’d formed a kind of gauntlet or gamut—what is it, I can never get those two things straight, is ‘gauntlet’ the glove that you throw down when you challenge somebody to a duel or is that ‘gamut’? Anyway this was the other one.”

“ ‘Gantlet’ is actually the word you’re looking for,” says Doug. “I think,” he hedges, for modesty’s sake.

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fancy, lumpy kind of cranberry sauce with real berries, but I prefer the cheap, jellied kind. I seem to be the only one paying any attention at all to the food.

"Toward the end of the dance I spotted your father hovering. He was dressed exactly the way he is now. Could that be the same tie?" My father looks down at the neckwear in question, pennon of some lost regiment of the King's Army, and shakes his head. "He was kind of cute square," Mom continues. "And, oh, I remember—he was wearing white bucks."

"Not I," said my father, but I could see he was starting to enjoy this. "Tan bucks, maybe."

"You were. That was almost the cutest part about you, your nervous white feet. He kept circling us, getting a tiny bit closer each time, all nonchalant and pretending not to notice me. Well, he panicked when they announced the last song—I think it was 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes.' "

My mother breaks off her narrative to warble a bar: "They asked me how I knew my true love was true. . . ."

"What's the matter with you?" my father demands, noticing my suddenly crumpled demeanor. Philomena and I used to love that song in its Bryan Ferry version.

"And when another boy asked me to dance," Mom resumes, "his face just collapsed."

My father snorts in disapproval. "Oh, come on."

"Well, after it ended, I dragged my feet on the way out. If I'd walked any slower I think I would have taken root in the pavement, and I was just about to give up on him when I felt a hand on my shoulder in the parking lot."

"What'd he say?" asks Brooke.

"He asked me if I wanted a tour of the campus."

Brooke hoots with laughter. "At least he didn't ask you to see his etchings."

The Japanese family aim their solemn dark eyes at us, strange noisy *gaijin*. "I didn't say that," Dad insists.

"Well, I didn't really need to see the campus, but I told him I'd love to go somewhere where we could talk. So we ended up sitting in his roommate's Buick. And of course the talking led to kissing. I thought he was just a wonderful kisser, and after about ten minutes I realized he was just in agony, and so of course I wanted to help him. It seemed like the least I could do."

"Lillie!"

"And the poor sweet boy was so grateful he proposed to me right there in the back of that Buick."

"What?" Brooke asks, "You gave him a blow job?"

"Young lady!"

"Well," says Mom, "I just, you know, used my hand."

DAD DEMURS

"THIS is not family conversation!" Dad thumps the table with his fist, making shimmery waves on our beverages.

"You got a proposal out of a hand job?" Brooke is impressed, Doug is nonplussed. I am thinking back on a time when Philomena and I were still mad for each other and she gave me a hand job in a cab. Why didn't I propose to her then? Why didn't I ever? If only I had, she would be here now, having Thanksgiving dinner, comparing notes on post-ejaculatory proposals with my mom.

WORD FROM RALSTON

MY phone rings. My caller ID shows an incoming call from Los Angeles.

"Hello?"

"Hello, could I please speak to Collin McNab?"

"You can and you are."

"What?"

"This is Collin McNab."

"Oh, this is Cherie Smith. Chip Ralston's assistant? Hello? What was that noise?"

"Nothing, really," I say as I write down the number. "It was probably a gasp of disbelief."

"Oh. Well, Chip just wanted me to tell you that he's changed his mind about the article. He doesn't want to do it, after all."

"Wait just a New York minute. We had an agreement."

"I'm sorry. I don't know anything about that. He just told me to tell you is all."

"Let me talk to him," I say. It's not that I'm dying to write a fucking article about Chip fucking Ralston, but I do not have enough money in my checking account to pay my half of the rent next month, let alone Philomena's.

"I'm sorry, but he's very busy right now. I'm sure it's nothing personal. Well, have a really nice day. Bye."

I'm not going to give up that easily. I wait fifteen minutes, and then call the number I wrote down.

"Hello?"

I am stunned silent.

"Hello," says the familiar voice again. "Who is this?"

"Phil?"

"Collin?"

"What the . . . what are you doing there?" I demand, but the answer seems obvious enough, if somewhat incredible.

"How did you . . . "

"Jesus. I can't believe this is happening."

"I . . . didn't want to hurt your feelings," she says.

"You didn't *want* to hurt my feelings. So. That's why you're fucking Chip Ralston? To spare my feelings? What would you do if you actually *wanted* to hurt me and crush my spirit beyond repair?"

"I mean, that's why I didn't want you to know."

"And that's why he blew me off for the stupid fucking interview?"

"Well, you could hardly write objectively about him under the circumstances."

"I thought you were in Montana." I think I am hoping that if I find a hole in her story, an inconsistency, the whole thing will turn out to be a joke.

"We were."

"*We were.*"

"I'm going back up there in a few days."

"It must be just lovely."

"I told you I wanted a simpler life."

"Simpler life? You're moving to Livingston fucking Montana with Chip fucking Ralston. Do you have any idea what a cliché that is? I've got it in my computer. Control MONTANA CLICHÉ. It's not simple. It's just . . . stupid."

She is silent on the other end and,

as for me, I can hardly speak. Finally I say, "This is a joke, right?"

"Collin, these things happen. You know? It's nobody's fault."

"Chip Ralston?"

"I can understand your being upset."

"It's pathetic."

"Don't make me say things you don't want to hear."

"That fucking midget," I say, and then I slam down the phone, and regret it immediately. Scooping up an Imari vase, Philomena's prized possession, I hurl it against the wall, where it shatters gratifyingly. We bought the vase on a trip to Kyoto, and I remember wondering what would happen to it, the first durable object we purchased together. Would we look at it ten years, twenty years hence and remember? Afterward, we went back to the *ryokan* in the hills, where a deep cedar tub was steaming in anticipation of our arrival, and blue-and-white striped robes had been laid out on the black-bordered tatami mats. Would I go back to that time, if I could? Would I relive it all to this moment, with foreknowledge? Or would I drown the bitch right there in the tub?

PARTING WORDS FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"PLEASE hold for Jillian."

I'd rather not, thanks.

"Whatever you did to alienate Chip Ralston and his people," my editrix says by way of greeting, "I'm afraid it's rather the last straw. At any rate, I don't think your heart was ever in this enterprise. I'm sure you'll find a position more worthy of your, uh, talents elsewhere, yes? Well, I think that covers it."

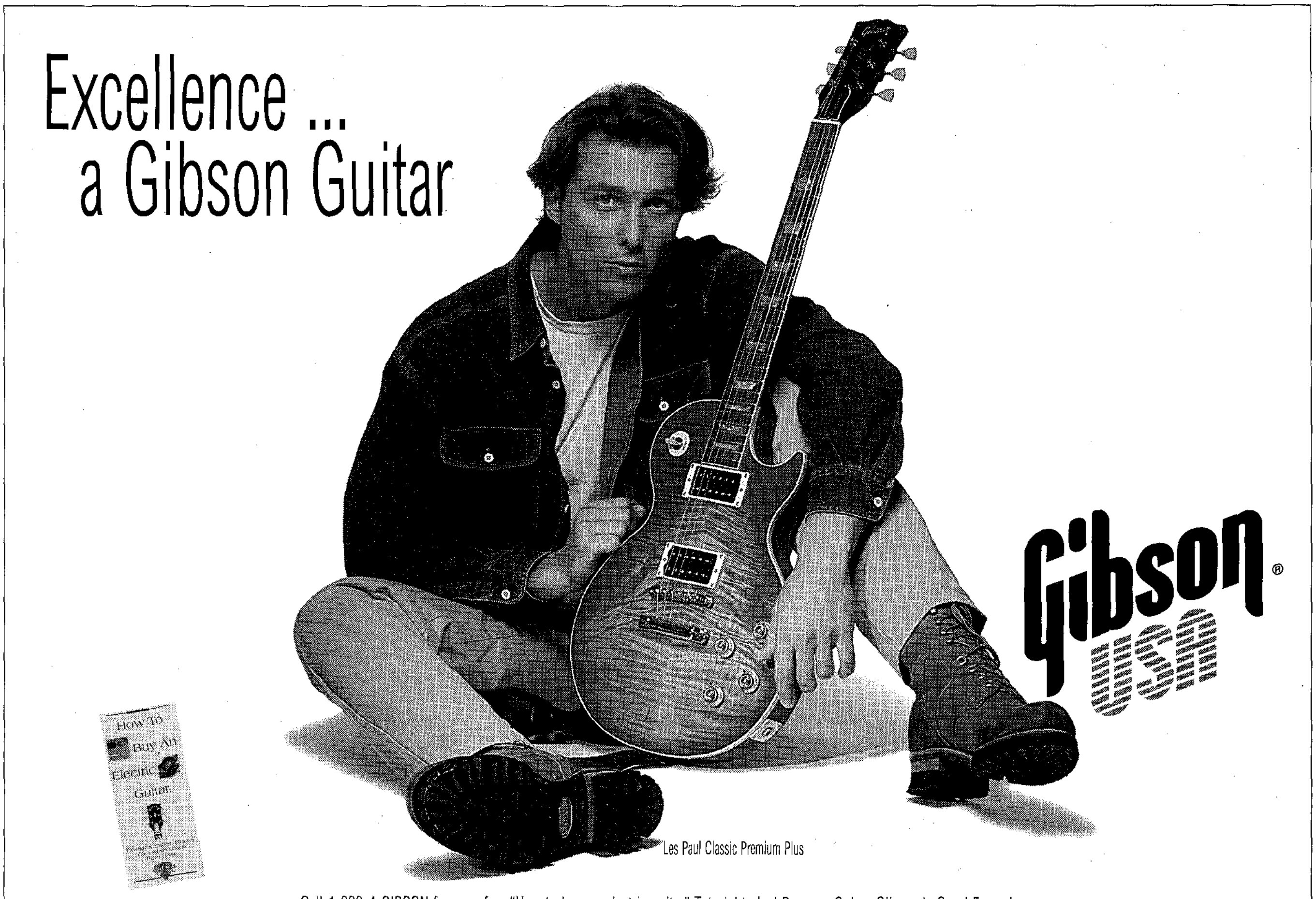
"What *I* did? The son of a bitch is fucking my girlfriend."

"Well, I think that's very democratic of him. *Droit du seigneur* and all. Quite an honor." She pauses to inhale. "You know, I keep thinking you've been hanging out for long enough—that you *ought* to be dry behind the ears by now. I kept waiting. Goodbye, Collin."

ONE WEEK LATER, THEATRE DISTRICT

WE are clustered around the side entrance of the Ed Sullivan Theatre, on West Fifty-third Street, home of the "Late Show with David Letterman." Two blue police barriers make a corridor from the curb to the stage door. A security man stands nearby while we press up against the barricades, autograph books clutched to our chests, stamping our cold feet. We don't mind the cold. We're fans, real fans, big fans. We are the biggest fans. As in "Hey, Clint, I'm your biggest fan." (Most of us are, anyway, although one is an impostor.)

Clarence, for instance, with his huge, fur-hooded Army-surplus parka, his scholarly, thick, black glasses, has the unabashed air of a man engaged in an important pursuit: "I just got Brooke Shields, man. She's a real nice lady. Not like that Richard Chamberlain. Richard Chamberlain, he comes through here, he shakes your hand. That sucks,



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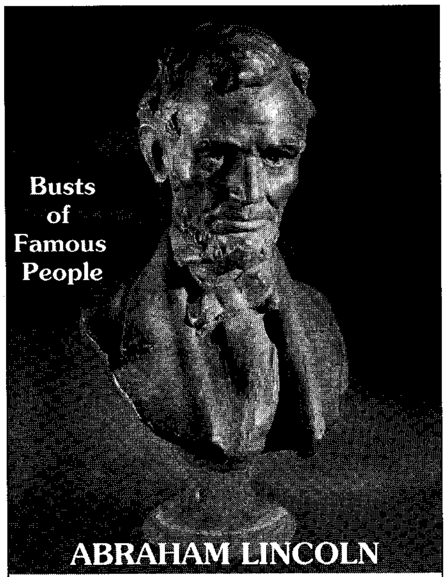

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man. What I'm gonna do with a handshake?"

"Can't sell it," says Charlie, an incongruously sane-looking gentleman in a Mets warmup jacket who is probably a plumber in Patchogue, Long Island, when he isn't here outside the Ed Sullivan Theatre or in the lobby of NBC headquarters, in Rockefeller Center. He and his friend Tony are armed with five-by-eight index cards and the squeaky-wheel, Me Me Me manners of born New Yorkers. If they can get three cards signed, they will sell two to a dealer.

Suddenly the throng goes taut and silent, a lovestruck jellyfish, as a shiny black stretch fins up to the curb and stops, its cargo invisible behind the smoked glass.

The stately, plump driver marches around, opens the door.

"Chip!" screams one of the photographers. "Over here!"

"Hey, Chip!"

"I'm your biggest fan, Chip."

"How about an autograph, Chip?"

"Look over here! Smile!"

Chip hesitates, framed in the open door of the limo, before he launches himself toward the stage door, hunched over, his head retracted into the shell of his jacket, moving quickly, but not quickly enough to dodge me as I slide under the police barrier and cut him off from the stage door.

"Hi, Chip, I'm Collin McNab." Savoring for a nanosecond the infusion of fear in his much admired and, indeed, very striking, hazel eyes before I nail him with a hard right jab, aimed at the bridge of the nose, that actually connects with his temple as he tries to duck away. Solid contact, nonetheless. Solid enough to hurt the shit out of my hand.

"I'm your biggest fuckin' fan, Chip," I say, as he wobbles, and then sinks to his knees just as a security guard tackles me and smashes my face against the grainy concrete.

Good news, Clarence and Charlie: I see stars!

THE LEMON LIGHT

By the time my name is called, Brooke is waiting for me by the front desk at the Eighteenth Precinct. So is a reporter from the *Post.* A sallow man, ancient by newspaper standards—easily forty—he pushes back the bill of his cap, which bears the logo "New York—It Ain't Over," and flips open his steno pad.

"Why'd you do it?" he asks as I finish signing at the desk.

"I didn't like his acting choices."

"Is it true you've been stalking Chip Ralston for months?"

Brooke takes my arm as we bolt for the door. Outside, we are ambushed by three photographers.

"Collin, look here."

"Is that your girlfriend?"

"How about the two of you kissing for a picture?"

They follow us down the street, yipping and snapping. So this is what it's like, I think.

Finally we are alone and anonymous again on the sidewalk. The next day the *Post* will run a photo of me and Brooke, who is identified, half correctly, as my girlfriend.

"So," Brooke says. "What do you want to do? Go to Rockefeller Center and watch the skaters?" For some reason I find this hilarious. "Then maybe check out the windows at Saks." She's laughing now.

"Catch the Christmas show at Radio City," I suggest.

"I don't know if they let felons in to see the Rockettes."

Brooke's demeanor turns earnest. "Maybe if we act like we just got off the bus and it's our first day ever in the city, and we've come from really far away to see the lights on Fifth Avenue and the tree . . . " She shrugs, takes my hand and begins to lead me east on Fiftieth.

And, walking through the slanting secondhand light toward Rockefeller Center and Fifth Avenue, I remember that the city used to seem to me like a colossal Christmas tree spangled with lights. Prowling the streets at night, you felt that every luminous tower was a glittering enigma that might secretly bear your name. I remember the joy, not so very long ago, of waking up newly arrived in the city, believing that everything I wanted in the world was waiting outside the door of my apartment, right down the street . . . just around the next corner . . . or the one after. ♦

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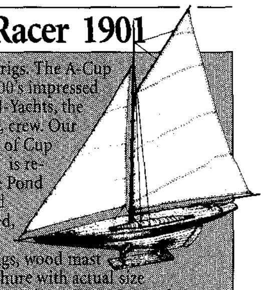

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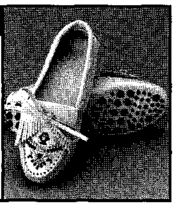
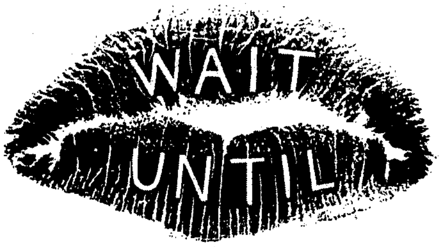


FICTION

HOW TO DATE A BROWN GIRL

(*black girl, white girl, or halfie*)

BY JUNOT DÍAZ



your brother, your sisters, and your mother leave the apartment. You've already told them that you were feeling too sick to go to Union City to visit that *tía* who likes to squeeze your nuts. (He's gotten big, she'll say.) And even though your moms knew you weren't sick you stuck to your story until finally she said, Go ahead and stay, *malcriado*.

Clear the government cheese from the refrigerator. If the girl's from the Terrace, stack the boxes in the crisper. If she's from the Park or Society Hill, then hide the cheese in the cabinet above the oven, where she'll never see it. Leave a reminder under your pillow to get out the cheese before morning or your moms will kick your ass. Take down any embarrassing photos of your family in the *campo*, especially that one with the half-naked kids dragging a goat on a rope. Hide the picture of yourself with an Afro. Make sure the bathroom is presentable. Since your toilet can't flush toilet paper, put the bucket with all the crapped-on toilet paper under the sink. Spray the bucket with Lysol, then close the lid.

Shower, comb, dress. Sit on the couch and watch TV. If she's an outsider her father will bring her, maybe her mother. Her parents won't want her seeing a boy from the Terrace—people get stabbed in the Terrace—but she's strong-headed and this time will get her way. If she's a white girl, you're sure you'll at least get a hand job.

The directions you gave her were in your best handwriting, so her parents won't think you're an idiot. Get up from the couch and check the parking lot. Nothing. If the girl's local, don't sweat. She'll flow over when she's good and ready. Sometimes she'll run into her friends and a whole crowd will show up, and even though that means you ain't getting shit it will be fun anyway and you'll wish these people would come over more often. Sometimes the girl won't flow over at all and the next day in school she'll say, Sorry, and smile, and you'll believe her and be stupid enough to ask her out again.

You wait, and after an hour you go out to your corner. The neighborhood is full of traffic—commuters now cut through the neighborhood—making it hard on the kids and the *viejas*, who are used to empty streets. Give one of your friends a shout and when he says, Still waiting on that bitch? say, Hell, yeah.

Get back inside. Call her house and when her father picks up ask if she's there. If he sounds like a principal or a police chief, a dude with a big neck, someone who never has to watch his back, then hang up. Sit and wait. And wait. Until finally, just as your stomach is about to give out on you, a Honda, or maybe a Cherokee, will pull in and out she'll come.

Hey, she'll say.

Come on in, you'll say.

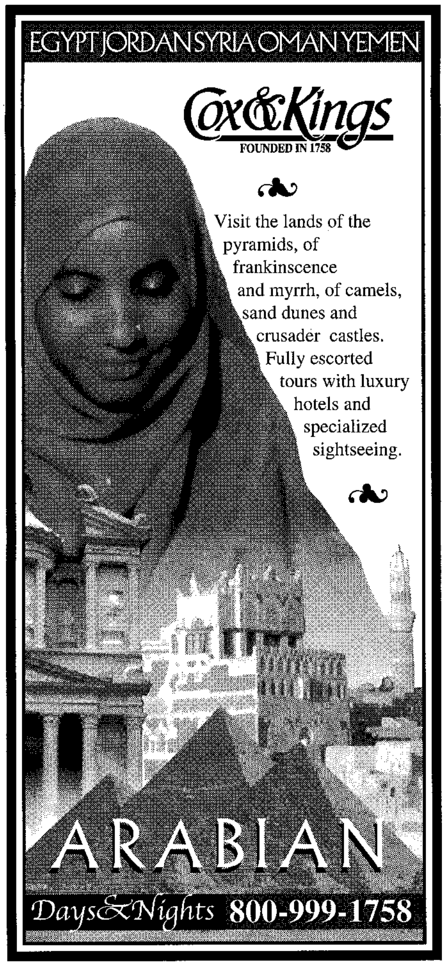
Look, she'll say. My mom wants to meet you. She's got herself all worried about nothing.

Don't panic. Say, Hey, no problem. Run a hand through your hair like the white boys do, even though the only thing that runs easily through your hair is Africa. She will look good. White girls are the ones you want most, aren't they? But the out-of-towners are usually black—black girls who grew up with ballet and Girl Scouts, and have three cars in their driveway. If she's a halfie don't be surprised that her mother is the white one. Say, Hi. She'll say, Hi, and you'll see that you don't scare her, not really. She will say that she needs easier directions to get out, and even though she already has the best directions on her lap, give her new ones. Make her happy.

If the girl's from the Terrace, none of this will happen.

You have choices. If the girl's from around the way, take her to El Cibao for

FILIP PAGOWSKI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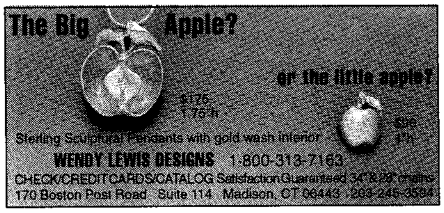
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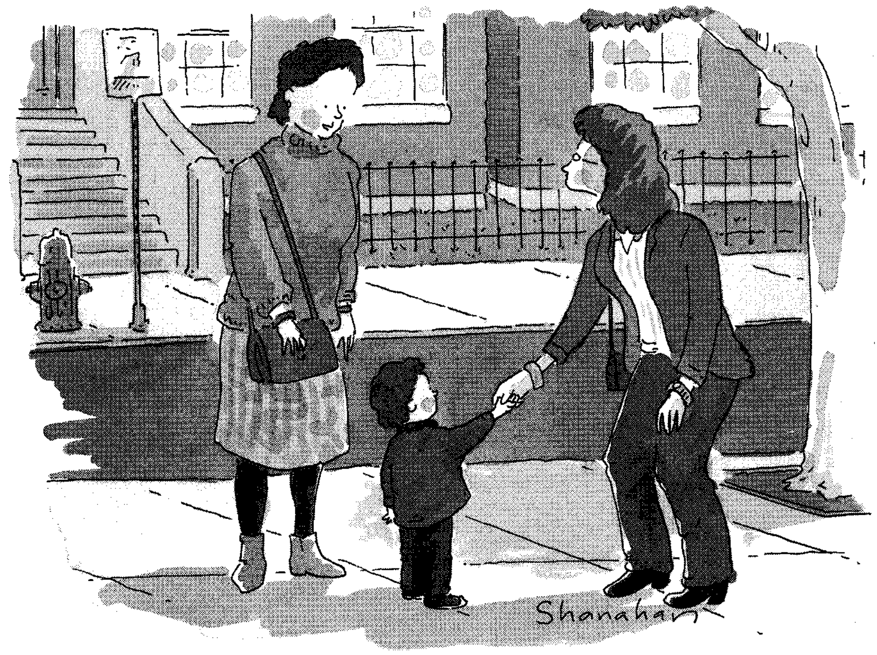

"Jeremy reads children's books."

• •

dinner. Order everything in your busted-up Spanish. Amaze her if she's black, let her correct you if she's Latina. If she's not from around the way, Wendy's will do. As you walk to the restaurant, talk about school. A local girl won't need stories about the neighborhood, but the others might. Tell her about the *pendejo* who stored canisters of Army tear gas in his basement for years until one day they all cracked and the neighborhood got a dose of military-strength stuff. Don't tell her that your moms knew right away what it was, that she recognized the smell from the year the United States invaded your island.

Hope that you don't run into your nemesis, Howie, the Puerto Rican kid with the two killer mutts. He walks them all over the neighborhood, and every now and then the mutts corner a cat and tear it to shreds, as Howie laughs and the cat flips up in the air, its neck twisted around like an owl's, red meat showing through the soft fur. And if his dogs haven't cornered a cat, then he'll be behind you, asking, Is that your new fuckbuddy?

Let him talk. Howie weighs two hundred pounds and could eat you if he wanted. But at the field he'll turn away. He has new sneakers and doesn't want them muddy. If the girl's an outsider, that's when she'll hiss, What a fucking asshole. A homegirl would have been yelling back at him the whole time, unless she was shy. Either way, don't feel bad that you didn't do anything. Never lose a fight on a first date.

Dinner will be tense. You are not good at talking to people you don't know.

A halfie will tell you that her parents met in the Movement. Back then, she'll say, people thought it was a radical thing to do. It will sound like something her parents made her memorize. Your brother heard that one, too, and said, Sounds like a whole lot of Uncle Tomming to me. Don't repeat this.

Put down your hamburger and say, It must have been hard.

It was, she will say.

She'll appreciate your interest. She'll tell you more. Black people, she will say, treat me real bad. That's why I don't like them. You'll wonder how she feels about Dominicans. Don't ask. Let her speak on it and when you've finished eating, walk back through the neighborhood. The skies will be magnificent. Pollutants have made Jersey sunsets one of the wonders of the world. Point it out. Touch her shoulder and say, Isn't that nice?

Get serious. Watch TV, but stay alert. Sip some of the Bermudez your father left in the cabinet, which nobody touches. She'll drink enough to make her brave. A local girl will have hips and a nice ass but won't be quick about letting you touch her. She has to live in the same neighborhood as you do. She might just chill with you and then go home. She might kiss you and then leave. Or she might, if she's reckless, give it up, but that's rare. Kissing will suffice. A white girl might give it up right then. Don't stop her. She'll take her gum out of her mouth, stick it to the plastic sofa covers, and then move close to you. You have nice eyes, she might say.

Tell her that you love her hair, her skin, her lips, because, in truth, you love them more than you love your own.

She'll say, I like Spanish guys, and even though you've never been to Spain, say, I like you. You'll sound smooth.

You'll be with her until about eight-thirty, and then she'll want to wash up. In the bathroom, she'll hum a song from the radio and her waist will keep the beat against the lip of the sink. Think of her old lady coming to get her, and imagine what she would say if she knew that her daughter had just lain under you and blown your name into your ear. While she's in the bathroom, you might call one of your boys and say, *Ya lo hice, cabrón*. Or sit back on the couch and smile.

But usually it won't work this way. Be prepared. She will not want to kiss you. Just cool it, she'll say. The halfie might lean back and push you away. She will cross her arms and say, I hate my tits. Pretend to watch the TV, and then turn to her to stroke her hair, even though you know she'll pull away again. I don't like anybody to touch my hair, she will say. She will act like somebody you don't know. In school, she is known for her attention-grabbing laugh, high and far-ranging like a gull's, but here she will worry you. You will not know what to say.

You're the only kind of guy who asks me out, she will say. Your neighbors will start their hyena calls, now that the alcohol is in them. She will say, You and the black boys.

You want to say, Who do you want to ask you out? But you already know. Let her button her shirt and comb her hair, the sound of it like a crackling fire between you. When her father pulls in and beeps, let her go without too much of a goodbye. She won't want it. During the next hour, the phone will ring. You will be tempted to pick it up. Don't. Watch the shows you want to watch, without a family around to argue with you. Don't go downstairs. Don't fall asleep. It won't help. Put the government cheese back in its place before your moms kills you. ♦

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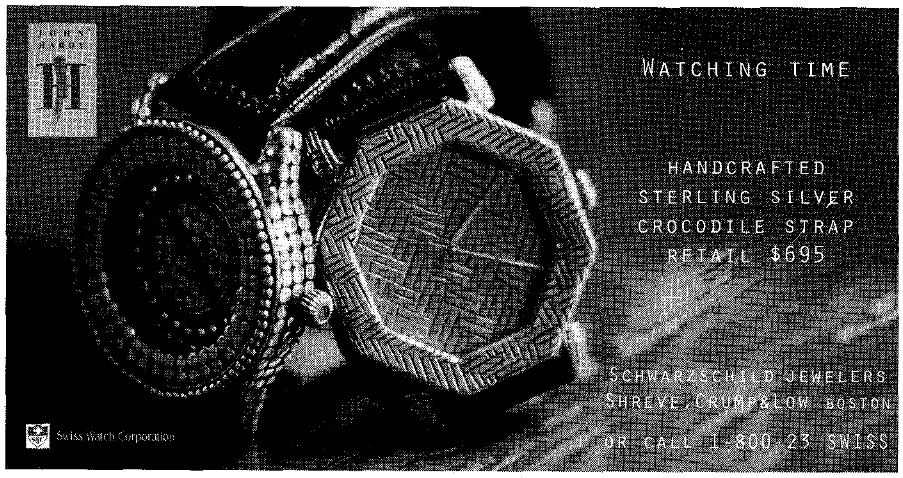


LIFE AND LETTERS

WHY WRITE?

BY PAUL AUSTER

1

A German friend tells of the circumstances that preceded the births of her two daughters.

Nineteen years ago, hugely pregnant and already several weeks past due, A. sat down on the sofa in her living room and turned on the television set. As luck would have it, the opening credits of a film were just coming onscreen. It was "The Nun's Story," a nineteen-fifties Hollywood drama starring Audrey Hepburn. Glad for the distraction, A. settled in to watch the movie and immediately got caught up in it. Halfway through, she went into labor. Her husband drove her to the hospital, and she never learned how the film turned out.

Three years later, pregnant with her second child, A. sat down on the sofa and turned on the television set once again. Once again a film was playing, and once again it was "The Nun's Story," with Audrey Hepburn. Even more remarkable (and A. was very emphatic about this point), she had tuned in to the film at the precise moment where she had left off three years earlier. This time, she was able to see the film through to the end. Less than fifteen minutes later, her water broke, and she went off to the hospital to give birth for the second time.

These two daughters are A.'s only children. The first labor was extremely difficult (my friend nearly didn't make it and was ill for many months afterward), but the second delivery went smoothly, with no complications of any kind.

2

Five years ago, I spent the summer with my wife and children in Vermont, renting an old, isolated farmhouse on the top of a mountain. One day, a woman from the next town stopped by to visit, along with her two children, a girl of four and a boy of eighteen months. My daughter had just turned three, and she and the girl enjoyed playing with each other. My wife and I sat down in the kitchen with our guest, and the children ran off to amuse themselves.

Five minutes later, there was a loud crash. The little boy had wandered into the front hall at the other end of the house. Since my wife had put a vase of flowers in that hall just two hours earlier, it wasn't difficult to guess what had happened. I didn't have to look to know that the floor would be covered with broken glass and a pool of water—along with the stems and petals of a dozen scattered flowers.

I was annoyed. "Goddam kids," I said to myself. "Goddam people with their goddam clumsy kids. Who gave them the right to drop by without calling first?"

I told my wife that I'd clean up the mess, and so while she and our visitor continued their conversation I gathered up a broom, a dustpan, and some towels and marched off to the front of the house.

My wife had put the flowers on a wooden trunk that sat just below the staircase railing. This staircase was especially steep and narrow, and there was a large window not more than a yard from the bottom step. I mention this geography because it's important. Where things were has everything to do with what happened next.

I was about half finished with the cleanup job when my daughter rushed out from her room onto the second-floor landing. I was close enough to the foot of the stairs to catch a glimpse of her (a couple of steps back and she would have been blocked from view), and in that brief moment I saw that she had that high-spirited, utterly happy expression that has filled my middle age with such overpowering gladness. Then, an instant later, before I could even say hello, she tripped. The toe of her sneaker had caught on the landing, and just like that, without any cry or warning, she was sailing through the air. I don't mean to suggest that she was falling or tumbling or bouncing down the steps. I mean to say that she was flying. The stumble had literally launched her into space, and from the trajectory of her flight I could see that she was heading straight for the window.

What did I do? I don't know what I did. I was on the wrong side of the bannister when I saw her trip. By the time she was midway between the landing and the window I was standing on the bottom step of the staircase. How did I get there? It was no more than a question of several feet, but it hardly seems possible to cover that distance in that amount of time—which is next to no time at all. Nevertheless, I was there, and the moment I got there I looked up, opened my arms, and caught her.

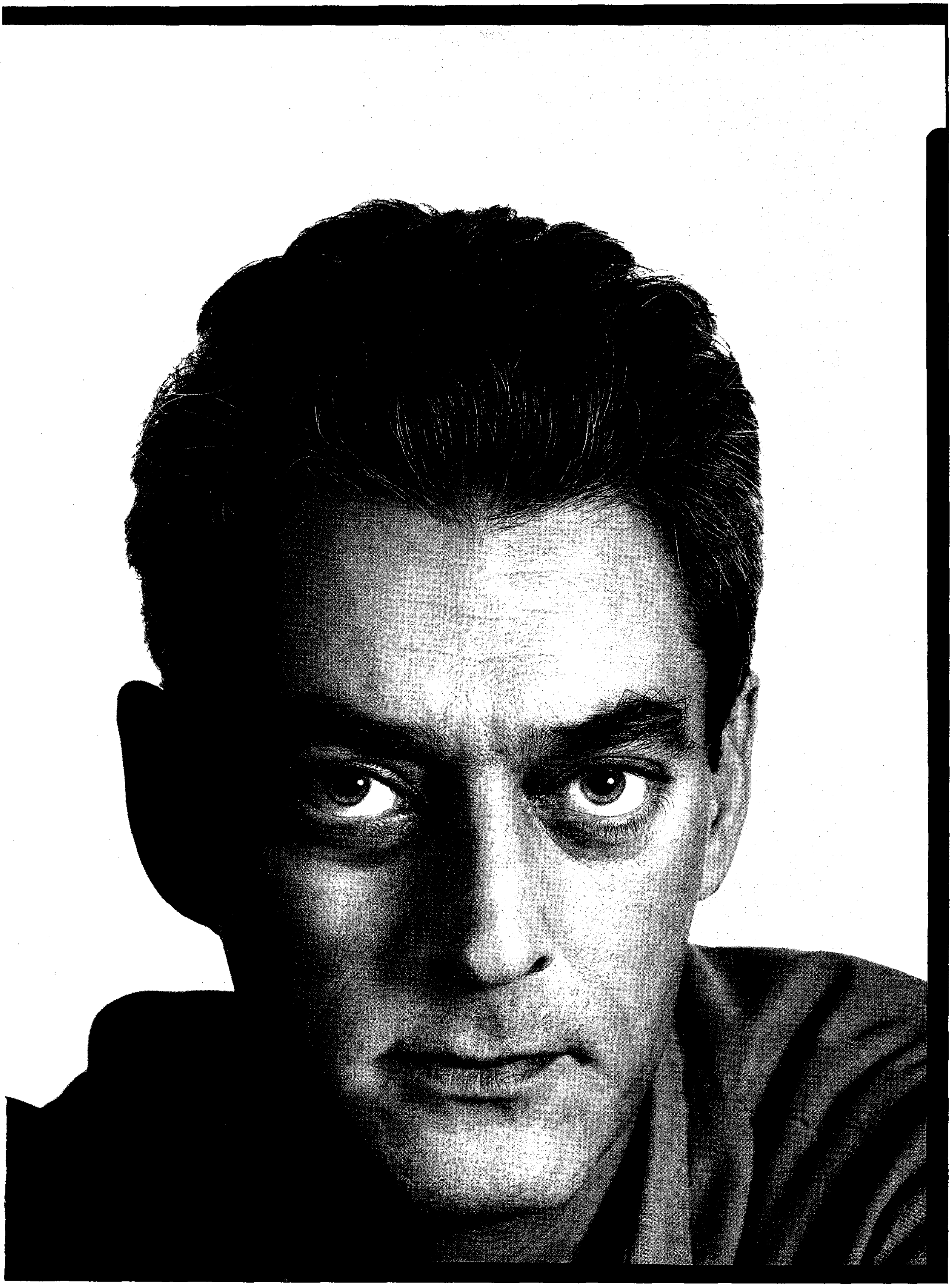
3

I was fourteen. For the third year in a row, my parents had sent me to a summer camp in New York State. I spent the bulk of my time playing basketball and baseball, but as it was a coed camp there were other activities as well: evening "socials," the first awkward grapplings with girls, panty raids, the usual adolescent shenanigans. I also remember smoking cheap cigars on the sly, "Frenching" beds, and massive water-balloon fights.

None of this is important. I simply want to underscore what a vulnerable age fourteen can be. No longer a child, not yet an adult, you bounce back and forth between who you were and who you are about to become. In my own case, I was still young enough to think that I had a legitimate shot at playing in the major leagues, but old enough to be questioning the existence of God. I had read the "Communist Manifesto," and yet I still enjoyed watching Saturday-morning cartoons. Every time I saw my face in the mirror, I seemed to be looking at someone else.

There were about sixteen or eighteen boys in my group. Most of us had been together for several years, but a couple of newcomers had also joined us that summer. One was named Ralph. He was a quiet kid without much enthusiasm for dribbling basketballs and hitting the

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON
Paul Auster, New York City, November 14, 1995.



cutoff man, and while no one gave him a particularly hard time, he had trouble blending in. He had flunked a couple of subjects that year, and most of his free periods were spent being tutored by one of the counsellors. It was a little sad, and I felt sorry for him—but not too sorry, not sorry enough to lose any sleep over it.

Our counsellors were all New York college students from Brooklyn and Queens. Wisecracking basketball players, future dentists, accountants, and teachers, city kids to their very bones. Like most true New Yorkers, they persisted in calling the ground the "floor," even when all that was under their feet was grass, pebbles, and dirt. The trappings of traditional summer-camp life were as alien to them as the I.R.T. is to an Iowa farmer. Canoes, lanyards, mountain climbing, pitching tents, singing around the campfire were nowhere to be found in the inventory of their concerns. They could drill us on the finer points of setting picks and boxing out for rebounds; otherwise they horsed around and told jokes.

Imagine our surprise, then, when one afternoon our counsellor announced that we were going for a hike in the woods. He had been seized by an inspiration and wasn't going to let anyone talk him out of it. Enough basketball, he said. We're surrounded by nature, and it's time we took advantage of it and started acting like real campers—or words to that effect. And so, after the rest period that followed lunch, the whole gang of sixteen or eighteen boys, along with two counsellors, set off into the woods.

It was late July, 1961. Everyone was in a fairly buoyant mood, I remember, and half an hour or so into the trek most people agreed that the outing had been a good idea. No one had a compass, of course, or the slightest clue as to where we were going, but we were all enjoying ourselves, and if we happened to get lost, what difference would that make? Sooner or later we'd find our way back.

Then it began to rain. At first, it was barely noticeable, a few light drops falling between the leaves and branches, nothing to worry about. We walked on, unwilling to let a little water spoil our fun, but a couple of minutes later it started coming down in earnest. Everyone got soaked, and the counsellors decided that we should turn around and head back. The only problem was that no one knew where the camp was. The woods were thick, dense with clusters of trees and thorn-studded bushes, and we had woven this way and that, abruptly shifting directions in order to move on. To add to the confusion, it was becoming hard to see. The woods had been dark to begin with, but, with the rain falling and the sky turning black, it felt more like night than three or four in the afternoon.

Then the thunder started. And after the thunder the lightning started. The storm was directly on top of us, and it turned out to be the summer storm to end all summer storms. I have never seen weather like that before or since. The rain poured down on us so hard that it actually hurt; each time the thunder exploded, you could feel the noise vibrating inside your body. When the lightning came, it danced around us like spears. It was as if weapons had materialized out of thin air—a sudden flash that turned everything a bright, ghostly white. Trees were struck, and their branches began to smolder. Then it would go dark again for a moment, there would be another crash in the sky, and the lightning would return in a different spot.

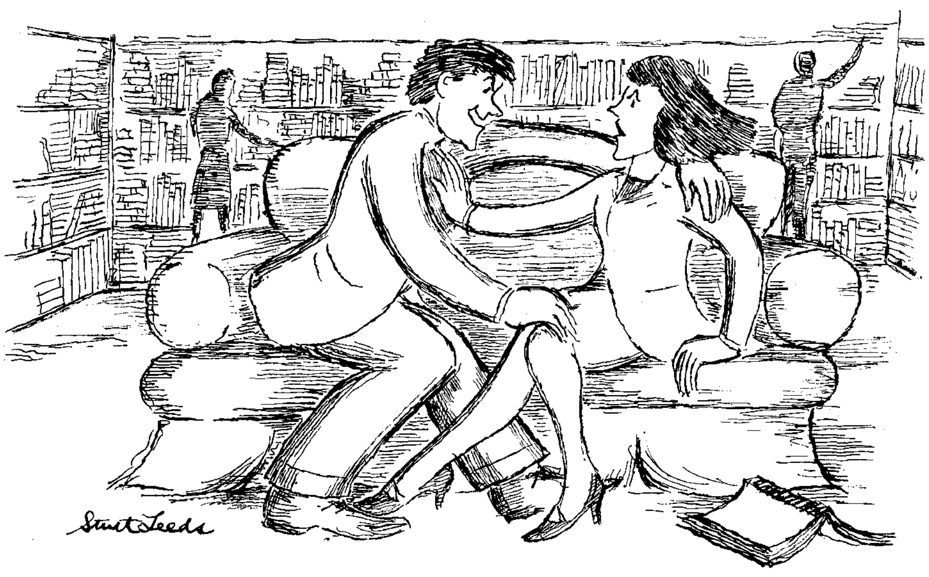
The lightning was what scared us, of course, and in our panic we tried to run away from it. But the storm was too big, and everywhere we went we were met by more lightning. It was a helter-skelter stampede, a headlong rush in circles. Then, suddenly, someone spotted a clearing in the woods. A brief dispute broke out over whether it was safer to go into the open or continue to stand under the trees. The voice arguing for the open won, and we ran in the direction of the clearing.

It was a small meadow, most likely a pasture that belonged to a local farm, and to get to it we had to crawl under a barbed-wire fence. One by one, we got down on our bellies and inched our way through. I was in the middle of the line, directly behind Ralph. Just as he went under the barbed wire, there was another flash of lightning. I was two or three feet away, but, because of the rain pounding against my eyelids, I had trouble making out what happened. All I knew was that Ralph had stopped moving. I figured that he had been stunned, so I crawled past him under the fence. Once I was on the other side, I took hold of his arm and dragged him through.

I don't know how long we stayed in that field. An hour, I would guess, and the whole time we were there the rain and lightning and thunder continued to crash down upon us. It was a storm ripped from the pages of the Bible, and it went on and on, as if it would never end.

Two or three boys were hit by something—perhaps by lightning, perhaps by the shock of lightning as it struck the ground near them—and the meadow began to fill with their moans. Other boys wept and prayed. Still others, fear in their voices, tried to give sensible advice. Get rid of everything metal, they said; metal attracts the lightning. We all took off our belts and threw them away from us.

I don't remember saying anything. I don't remember crying. Another boy and I kept ourselves busy trying to take care of Ralph. He was still unconscious. We rubbed his hands and arms, we held down his tongue so he wouldn't swallow it, we told him to hang in there. After a while, his skin began to take on a bluish tinge. His body seemed colder to my touch, but in spite of the mounting evidence it never



"Please, Mort, not in a Barnes & Noble Superstore."

occurred to me that he wasn't going to come around. I was only fourteen years old, after all, and what did I know? I had never seen a dead person before.

It was the barbed wire that did it, I suppose. The other boys hit by the lightning went numb, felt pain in their limbs for an hour or so, and then recovered. But Ralph had been under the fence when the lightning struck, and he had been electrocuted on the spot.

Later on, when they told me he was dead, I learned that there was an eight-inch burn across his back. I remember trying to absorb this news and telling myself that life would never feel the same to me again. Strangely enough, I didn't think about how I had been right next to him when it happened. I didn't think, One or two seconds later and it would have been me. What I thought about was holding his tongue and looking down at his teeth. His mouth had been set in a slight grimace, and, with his lips partly open, I had spent an hour looking down at the tips of his teeth. Thirty-four years later, I still remember them. And his half-closed, half-open eyes. I remember those, too.

4

NOT many years ago, I received a letter from a woman who lives in Brussels. In it, she told me the story of a friend of hers, a man she has known since childhood.

In 1940, this man joined the Belgian Army. When the country fell to the Nazis later that year, he was captured and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. He remained there until the war ended, in 1945.

Prisoners were allowed to correspond with Red Cross workers back in Belgium. The man was arbitrarily assigned a pen pal—a Red Cross nurse from Brussels—and for the next five years he and this woman exchanged letters every month. Over the course of time, they became fast friends. At a certain point (I'm not exactly sure how long this took), they understood that something more than friendship had developed between them. The correspondence went on, growing more intimate with each exchange, and at last they declared their love for each other. Was such a thing possible? They had never seen each other, had never spent a minute in each other's company.

After the war was over, the man was released from prison and returned to Brussels. He met the nurse, the nurse met him, and neither was disappointed. A short time later, they were married.

Years went by. They had children, they grew older, the world became a slightly different world. Their son completed his studies in Belgium and went off to do graduate work in Germany. At the university there, he fell in love with a young German woman. He wrote his parents and told them that he intended to marry her.

The parents on both sides couldn't have been happier for their children. The two families arranged to meet, and on the appointed day the German family showed up at the house of the Belgian family in Brussels. As the German father walked into the living room and the Belgian father rose to welcome him, the two men looked into each other's eyes and recognized each other. Many years had passed, but neither one was in any doubt as to who the other was. At one time in their lives, they had seen each other every day. The German father had been a guard in the prison camp where the Belgian father had spent the war.

As the woman who wrote me the letter hastened to add, there was no bad blood between them. However monstrous the German regime might have been, the German father had done nothing during those five years to turn the Belgian father against him.

These two men are now the best of friends. The greatest joy in both their lives is the grandchildren they have in common.

5

I WAS eight years old. At that moment in my life, nothing was more important to me than baseball. My team was the New York Giants, and I followed the doings of those men in the black-and-orange caps with all the devotion of a true believer. Even now, remembering that team—which no longer exists, which played in a ballpark that no longer exists—I can reel off the names of nearly every player on the roster. Alvin Dark, Whitey Lockman, Don Mueller, Johnny Antonelli, Monte Irvin, Hoyt Wilhelm. But none was greater, none more perfect nor more deserving of worship than Willie Mays, the incandescent Say Hey kid.

That spring, I was taken to my first big-league game. Friends of my parents had box seats at the Polo Grounds, and one April night a group of us went to watch the Giants play the Milwaukee Braves. I don't know who won, I can't recall a single detail of the game, but I do remember that after the game was over my parents and their friends sat talking in their seats until all the other spectators had left. It got so late that we had to walk across the diamond and leave by the center-field exit, which was the only one still open. As it happened, that exit was right below the players' locker rooms.

Just as we approached the wall, I caught sight of Willie Mays. There was no question about who it was. It was Willie Mays, already out of uniform and standing there in his street clothes not ten feet away from me. I managed to keep my legs moving in his direction and then, mustering every ounce of my courage, I forced some words out of my mouth. "Mr. Mays," I said, "could I please have your autograph?"

He had to have been all of twenty-four years old, but I couldn't bring myself to pronounce his first name.

His response to my question was brusque but amiable. "Sure, kid, sure," he said. "You got a pencil?" He was so full of life, I remember, so full of youthful energy, that he kept bouncing up and down as he spoke.

I didn't have a pencil, so I asked my father if I could borrow his. He didn't have one, either. Nor did my mother. Nor, as it turned out, did any of the other grownups.

The great Willie Mays stood there watching in silence. When it became clear that no one in the group had anything to write with, he turned to me and shrugged. "Sorry, kid," he said. "Ain't got no pencil, can't give no autograph." And then he walked out of the ballpark into the night.

I didn't want to cry, but tears started falling down my cheeks, and there was nothing I could do to stop them. Even worse, I cried all the way home in the car. Yes, I was crushed with disappointment, but I was also revolted at myself for not being able to control those tears. I wasn't a baby. I was eight years old, and big kids weren't supposed to cry over things like that. Not only did I not have Willie Mays' autograph, I didn't have anything else, either. Life had put me to the test, and in all respects I had found myself wanting.

After that night, I started carrying a pencil with me wherever I went. It became a habit of mine never to leave the house without making sure I had a pencil in my pocket. It's not that I had any particular plans for that pencil, but I didn't want to be unprepared. I had been caught empty-handed once, and I wasn't about to let it happen again.

If nothing else, the years have taught me this: if there's a pencil in your pocket, there's a good chance that one day you'll feel tempted to start using it. As I like to tell my children, that's how I became a writer. ◆

BIOGRAPHY

THE FIRST LIFE OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

Who was he before he became the world's most famous writer? The first authorized "life" stops at Valentine's Day, 1989. But it would have to, wouldn't it?

BY IAN HAMILTON

In Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children," Amina Sinai is persuaded to consult a soothsayer. She is about to give birth to the main character of an important novel, and she wants to know what to expect. The soothsayer tells her that the child will be a son—and "such a son!" The boy will "never be older than his motherland," and one day he will be very famous. The soothsayer continues to peer into the future and gets more and more worked up. He launches into a mad dance: "Crowds will shove him! Sisters will weep; cobra will creep. . . . Washing will hide him—voices will guide him! . . . Spittoons will brain him—doctors will drain him—jungle will claim him—wizards reclaim him! Soldiers will try him—tyrants will fry him . . ." The rhymes accumulate, the dance speeds up, and Amina begins to wish she'd never asked. And then the magic man achieves his climax: "*And he will die . . . before he is dead.*"

Salman Rushdie has a taste for ominous nativities. When he looks back now on the soothsayer's words, Rushdie smiles a shrugging smile. In 1989, he was condemned to death, but he is still alive. Alive and yet near posthumous. "For many people, I've become an issue, a bother, an 'affair.' " For Rushdie, there is the life he led pre-*fatwa* and the life he has led since.

His own birth—on June 19, 1947—came just two months before India's first day of independence, India's birthday, and he has always made much of the coincidence: baby Rushdie, baby India, twin destinies, linked fates.

As far as we know, the infant Ahmed Salman Rushdie arrived in pretty good condition: the first, long-hoped-for child of Anis Ahmed Rushdie and Negin Rushdie, née Butt—the father a barrister turned businessman, from Delhi, and the mother a teacher, from Aligarh, in northern India. According to family legend, the new child was unusually good-looking. Little Salman caught the eye. Mary Manezes, a worker in the Bombay hospital where he was born, took one look at him and decided that she would become this baby's ayah: in effect, his "second mother."

The Rushdies were a wealthy Muslim family—a notch down from India's super-rich, but rich enough. They called themselves upper-middle-class. Their money came from a leather-and-cloth business started by Anis Rushdie's father (who was also something of a poet), and by the mid-nineteen-forties the family owned real estate in northern India, including a grand colonialist folly on Westfield Estate, in Bombay, where they lived. The Rushdie residence was called Windsor Villa. It was a house fit for kings.

Down below, off Warden Road, were the shops: Chimalker's Toyshop, Reader's Paradise, and the confectioners Bombelli's, with their delectable One Yard of Chocolates. There was also the Breach Candy Swimming Club, even after Independence a segregated hideaway for Brits: "where pink people could swim in a pool the shape of British India without fear of rubbing up against a black skin."

Baby Rushdie was not pink, but he was strikingly light-skinned, and his parents were by no means anti-British—not publicly, at any rate. Anis Rushdie was a Cambridge man and proud of it. He had practiced as a lawyer before dedicating himself full time to the family business, and in Bombay he had status as a Europeanized sophisticate, a scholar of international range.

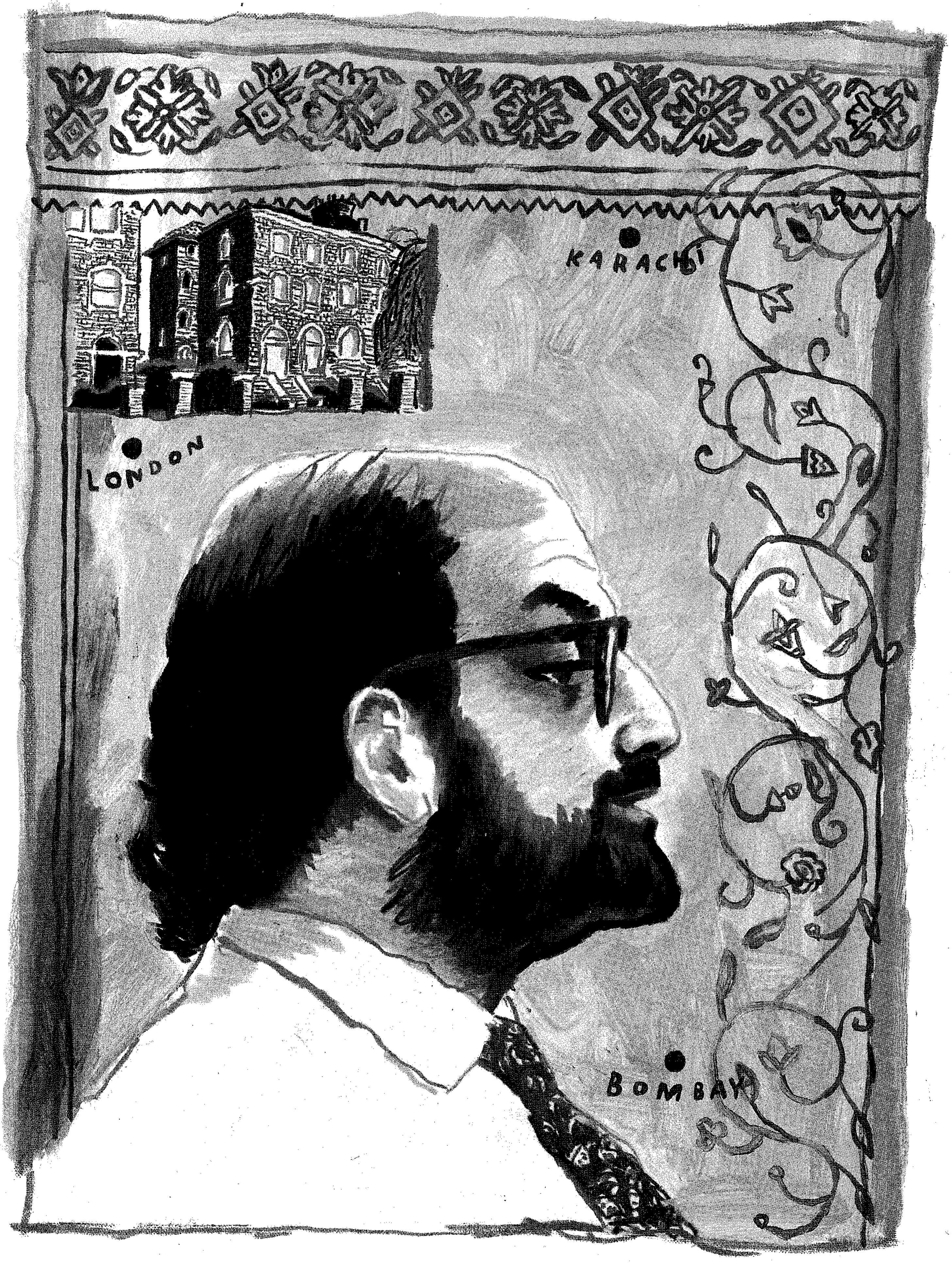
It is not entirely clear that this status was deserved. Anis had an impressive library, which may have been purchased in toto from a British colonel. In Salman Rushdie's "Shame" we read of a sham scholar whose books "all bore the *ex libris* plates of a certain Colonel Arthur Greenfield, and many of their pages were uncut," and in an interview published this year in the literary magazine *Brick* Rushdie speaks of having "had the feeling of growing up in quite a philistine house":

> I mean, my grandfather who was a very minor Urdu poet and essayist, was already dead before I was born, so I never knew him. My father had certainly studied English literature and Oriental literature in Cambridge, but that was a long time ago and he had since forgotten most of it, and certainly it is true—it's a terrible story to tell about my father but I will tell it since he's dead and can't answer back—that he bought a library. So a lot of the books at our house had once been collected by someone else. He just decided he needed books on the shelves so he went out and bought someone's library. So I lived in this house with a stranger's books, not my father's.

Was Anis Rushdie a sham scholar? Sameen Rushdie, the eldest of Salman Rushdie's three sisters, believes he wasn't: "He was within his field a very learned man. He knew a lot of classical Arabic, a lot of classical Persian. People would come to him as an authority if they had questions to ask." Even so, he seems never to have completed the one scholarly task that people knew about: editing for publication one of his own father's manuscripts—an interpretation of some part of the Koran, Sameen thinks.

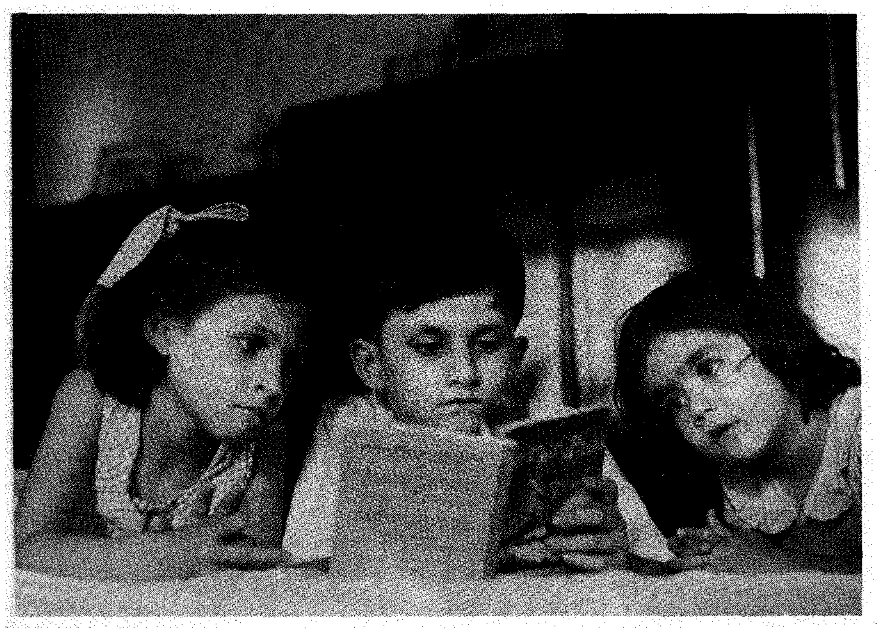
Anis did have one invaluable gift—and on this brother and sister are agreed. He knew how to tell a story. "My father," Rushdie has written, "was a magical parent of young children," and Rushdie regularly acknowledges the influence of his father's bedtime tales. "I grew up in a literary tradition," he once told Günter Grass. "That's to say that the kind of stories I was told as a child, by and large,

GERARD NICOLAS


KARACHI
LONDON
BOMBAY

were 'Arabian Nights' kind of stories. . . . It was accepted that stories should be untrue. . . . That horses and also carpets should fly." In Windsor Villa, the nightly story was a precious ritual. As Sameen recalls, Anis would sprawl out on "this huge big bed" and let the children climb all over him:

> We never had a "story a night." The story never ended. I remember begging for more but he'd say, "No—you just have to wait until tomorrow." One story fell into another story. Some of them were rooted in the "Arabian Nights," but he would embellish them and some he would tell straight, probably depending on how imaginative or tired he was feeling. That they never ended is what I remember.



Salman and his sisters reading "Peter Pan" in Bombay.

PHOTO COURTESY SAMEEN RUSHDIE

In Rushdie's "Haroun and the Sea of Stories," written for his own son, we read of Rashid Khalifa, a renowned storyteller whose "never-ending stream of tall, short and winding tales" earned him two nicknames: to those who admired him, Rashid was "the Ocean of Notions"; those who didn't called him "the Shah of Blah." Haroun, Rashid's son, often referred to his father as "a Juggler, because his stories were really lots of different tales juggled together, and Rashid kept them going in a sort of dizzy whirl, and never made a mistake."

Rushdie's mother also had a way with narrative, but her tales were rooted in real life. It was she, according to Rushdie, who was "the keeper of the family stories": she had "incredible genealogical gifts." The children had only to mention a name and she would be ready with the lowdown: "She would tell you who their mother had married or who their fourth cousin was or the terrible scandal that had happened to the grandparents." She was "a kind of encyclopedia of stories."

One story seems to have been missing from Negin's compendium: her own. Her first name had not always been Negin. She began life in Aligarh as Zohra Butt, and when she met Anis Rushdie she was already married. It seems that she and Anis began seeing each other before she eventually made the break from her first husband. The Butt family, though Muslim, was progressively inclined, but even so there was a need for some fairly delicate negotiations.

Salman Rushdie always speaks with warmth of his maternal grandfather, and Dr. Butt does seem to have been unusually enlightened for the time. A medical doctor, he had seen to it that his daughters got an education, and he never required them to observe purdah. When Zohra divorced in order to marry Anis (who was himself a divorcé), the arrangements were handled by her father. It was his idea that her new marriage contract should give her the right to divorce: a practice normally enjoyed only by the husband.

When Sameen and her brother were children, they were not told of these first marriages. The topic is still sensitive today. Sameen says:

> I was over thirteen before I knew that either of my parents had been married before. I remember feeling a great sense of shock. My mother finds it very hard to speak about her previous marriage—even now. She says, "You mustn't ask me about these things."

In "Midnight's Children" Salman Rushdie does speak about these things, but in his fictional telling the first marriage of Amina Sinai takes place, literally, beneath the ground. Thus a secret chapter from his mother's genealogical storybook gets published in the manner of one of his father's "Arabian Nights" fantasies—a cunning ploy.

Rushdie's books are full of such tricks: time and again, autobiography is reexperienced as fairy tale. Sometimes the intention is celebratory and fond; sometimes it is lavishly delinquent. Rushdie's "pell-mell" imagination is crowded with what-ifs: What if his father could be turned into a character in one of his own bedtime stories? What if all supposedly true-life experience could be fabulously reimagined? The wilder the fictional conjecture, the more gleefully energized Rushdie becomes. As he has said, his books have a spirit of connection with real life. But the spirit is mischievous. Readers who try to tease out links between Rushdie's life and Rushdie's fiction are likely to end up feeling teased.

ALTHOUGH the Rushdies were Europeanized and secular-progressive, they were still Muslim, and after Independence and Partition they had to tread with care. "From a very young age, we were conscious of being a Muslim minority in India," Sameen says. "There were certain things our parents never said out loud, certain things we knew we mustn't mention to anybody." Anis Rushdie's business and properties came under threat from both the Hindu mobs and the new post-Independence courts. Sameen says:

> There were questions about my family's loyalty to India: as Muslims who hadn't left. There were court cases. The government took over my father's properties, as being evacué properties. He had to prove that he hadn't left and then come back, that he had always been Indian. Because he had all these cases against him, no Hindus were to be trusted, really, although my father's best friends were Hindu.

In "The Satanic Verses" Salman Rushdie refers to the "lackadaisical, light manner" with which Bombay Muslims treated their religion. The Rushdies called themselves religious; they observed the Muslim festivals and sometimes they fasted during Ramadan, but on the whole their observances were lax.

The children were "never encouraged to play with Muslim children," and the Bombay school that Salman attended, the Cathedral and John Connon School, was more British than Indian; the prayers were strictly Church of England. Rushdie has recalled:

> We were obliged to say these Christian prayers—"Our Father," and so forth. It was very bizarre. Here was a school of maybe a thousand boys of whom maybe two per cent were Christian and we were obliged every morning to recite the "Our Father." None of us knew the words. We all knew the beginning but as we went through the "Our Father" everybody sort of ran out. And by the end of it there was just this mumble which had the right rhythm. I didn't know what "World without end" meant at all.

Salman's sister remembers him as "every parent's dream child." A year younger, and a girl, she envied him his golden status in the household. He was thoroughly adored: studious, obedient, "no trouble." He loved to read, he had to be persuaded to go out to play, and at school he mopped up all the prizes:

> In his school, we went every year to prize-giving. They had a prize for each subject and then they had an over-all prize. And he got *every* prize. He went on and off that stage, every year—it was just boring. History prize, Geography prize, English prize; and people would just laugh because it would be Salman who came on and off the stage. And then he came up and got the class prize. He must have got every prize every year he was at school.

Not surprisingly, Rushdie was not "street popular." If his parents had a worry, it was perhaps that he was *too* studious, *too* bookish. And maybe he agreed with them. He had no wish to be reviled as the school swot, and he would probably have traded at least some of his prizes for a single triumph on the sports field. "He was bad at sports. He'd kick the ball and fall over," Sameen says, and she believes that this failure hurt. "He never talked about it that much, but I think he minded. He was always a very keen spectator."

Readers of Salman Rushdie's fiction would suspect a substantial vein of mischief in his makeup, but as a child, at least, he was noted for his caution: "He was a *good child.* He never did what he shouldn't do." According to Sameen, this caution sprang not from a feebleness of spirit but from an excessive attachment to the truth. "He's very straight," she says. "In some ways too straight. I think it's this honesty that leads him to do the things he does." She remembers in particular a time when the Rushdie parents would send the children to the local club, with permission to sign a tab for any snacks they had—burgers, fries, ice cream:

> Then our father would get the bill and he would say: "You mustn't eat so much" or "You're only allowed to have"—whatever—"a Coke, some chips," or whatever the rule was. And Salman would have only what he was allowed, and I would continue to have whatever I wanted, really. We'd come home and they would say "What did you have?" and I would mention just one of the three things I'd had. But Salman would eat only what he could admit to. My memories of him are not of him being a rule-breaker.

Luckily, there was no vetting of the children's literary intake; in fact, the rule was that they could read whatever they wanted—comic books, movie magazines, trash fiction. Low culture was not perceived to be a threat. The little Rushdies were let loose on Reader's Paradise, with no restraints. Sameen says, "They thought, As long as they read, that's terrific. Let them find what they want."

It seems to have been much the same with films, if we can judge from Rushdie's habit of peppering his books with allusions to American B movies and to local "Bollywood" extravaganzas. As a child, he was a glutton for the Bombay talkies. He admired their unsubtle all-inclusiveness. Aimed largely at a village audience, the Hindi hit movie had to have something of everything—comedians, villains, fight sequences, music, dance, romance. It aimed for "total entertainment." The last thing it tried to be was true to life. Salman's Sunday-morning outing to the cinema was the high point of his week, and it is no surprise that the first story he attempted, at the age of ten, was movie-based. Its title was "Over the Rainbow," and it featured "a talking pianola whose personality is an improbable hybrid of Judy Garland, Elvis Presley and the 'playback singers' of the Hindi movies."

For Salman Rushdie nowadays, the most painful consequence of his predicament is that he may never again see Bombay. For most of us, the place we belong to is where we spent our childhood, or so we tend to say. In Rushdie's case, though, the attachment to Bombay is more than just nostalgic; it is an essential component of his talent. Martin Amis, on being asked what Rushdie's writing has that his, Amis's, does not, replied, "India—a subcontinent of comedy and pathos quite unavailable to me." And for Rushdie, as a child, India meant, first of all, Bombay. Whenever he describes his native city, it is as if he were describing the books he likes to write, the sensibility he wants to cultivate or keep intact: multicultural, plethoric, zany, bristling with weird beliefs, weird disbeliefs. "People from Bombay," he has said, "think of themselves as being unlike people from elsewhere."

AT the age of thirteen, in 1961, Rushdie was sent "elsewhere"—to England, to an English public school. And he was thrilled. When he was told that he was bound for Rugby, the home of Tom Brown, Flashman, Dr. Arnold, "it felt as exciting as any voyage beyond rainbows." For middle-class Indians of Rushdie's parents' generation, the English public school was "the acme of educational possibility." The Cathedral School's star pupil had landed the biggest of all prizes. At home, he was much envied. "We were quite jealous of Salman," Sameen recalls. "He'd gone off to England in this great big airplane and we'd think, You *must* love him best, because you've sent him to England, to boarding school. It was very glamorous." His leaving was a tearful occasion. "[My mother] really didn't want me to go," Salman has said. "I was her darling, her first-born." It is also possible that Negin had her doubts about the English, whose bathroom habits were known to be, well, a little unhygienic: "They wipe their bee tee ems with paper only. Also, they get into each other's dirty bathwater."

For Anis, this should have been the moment he had been waiting for, the moment when his fair-skinned, brilliant boy would be transformed into a proper English gent. By the time the two of them reached London, however, the proud father seems to have deflated. Anis, it was known, enjoyed a drink, and "he was also prone to explosions, murderous rages, bolts of emotional lightning." In Bombay, these rages came and went and could be seen as features of his paternal grandeur. He was the boss; he told the stories; he laid down the law.

BILL GATES
THE ROAD AHEAD

• •

In London, though, there was a crumbling, an abdication, that is still remembered with some fury by his then bewildered son.

Just what happened between them is unclear. On arriving in London, they checked into a double room at the Cumberland Hotel, at Marble Arch. They had some days before the Rugby term began, and during this time Salman seems to have discovered what Anis was really like. In "The Satanic Verses," Changez takes his son Salahuddin to England to attend a public school. The two of them stop off in London and check into a hotel. At this point, the father hands his son a walletful of cash and tells him, "Now that you are a man, it is for you to look after your old father while we are in London town. You pay all the bills." The boy is terrified; this is his first day in a foreign city. But Changez is in earnest and for two weeks "never put his hand into his own pocket once." The son has to buy food and school clothes. There are no movies, no restaurants, and no glimmer of the magic that had been dreamed of: it is all "pounds shillings pence." For their entire stay, Changez sits in his room watching cartoons on TV.

The son, meanwhile, experiences "the birth of the implacable rage which would burn within him, undiminished, for over a quarter of a century." This rage "would boil away his childhood father-worship and make him a secular man, who would do his best, thereafter, to live without a god of any type."

For Rushdie, in real life, the Cumberland Hotel episode was an important severing ("He drank too much and became abusive—it was the first time I saw him like that, the first time he was drunkenly abusive to me"), and he still speaks of it with feeling. It was a huge relief, he says, to leave his father for his English public school. As for Anis, it should perhaps be kept in mind that in 1961 his life was at a turning point. Should he continue living in Bombay, where his business was failing, or should he make the move to Pakistan, where some of his relatives already lived? Or should he move to England? Perhaps he envied his son's English prospects. Perhaps the boy's starry-eyed excitement was getting on his nerves. Or maybe it was just the drink.

On the train to Warwickshire, Salman registered the greens and grays, the patchwork fields, the "winter-naked trees." In India, he had once calculated, you could not travel on a train for fifteen seconds without spotting at least one human being—and, most likely, dozens. In England, you could go for several minutes and see no one. How could a country so tiny be so empty?

And then there was the school. In interviews, Rushdie has portrayed his time at Rugby as one of torment. He was, he has said, repeatedly the butt of racist taunts. His Indian-English way of speaking was laughed at, his essays were torn up, he was forever being made to feel alien, a misfit—he, who thought he was so British. On one of his first days at school, Rushdie was given a kipper for his breakfast. He had no idea how to eat it and classmates watched unhelpfully as he struggled to find out:

> He sat there staring at it, not knowing where to begin. Then he cut into it, and got a mouthful of tiny bones. And after extracting them all, another mouthful, more bones. His fellow-pupils watched him suffer in silence; not one of them said, here, let me show you, you eat it in this way. It took him ninety minutes to eat the fish and he was not permitted to rise from the table until it was done. By that time he was shaking, and if he had been able to cry he would have done so. Then the thought occurred to him that he had been taught an important lesson. England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it. He discovered that he was a bloody-minded person. "I'll show them all," he swore. "You see if I don't." The eaten kipper was his first victory, the first step in his conquest of England.

This kipper story appears in "The Satanic Verses," but Rushdie has said that it is "absolutely true," and that "it's one of the very few stories I've used in fiction which needed no embellishment at all."

Another Rugby story that Rushdie has told more than once describes him catching one of his studymates crayoning "Wogs Go Home" on a wall. The slogan, he thought, clearly was aimed at him. "I went insane. I grasped that boy by the collar with my left hand and by the belt with my right hand, and I banged him as hard as I could against the wall he was writing on." Rushdie has called this a determining moment in his school career—

indeed, in his whole attitude to life in England. It was the moment when he learned how to strike back.

When Rushdie's former Rugby classmates are asked about these stories—the kipper and the wall—they profess ignorance. They remember Rushdie's "strong accent," his ineptitude at sports, his premature beard growth, his "wonderful yarns of life in India," but none recall any racist bullying. Even the "Wogs Go Home" scribe named by Rushdie has no recollection of the incident. All of them thought that Rushdie was "clever"; some thought that he was "good fun." One fellow-pupil recalls Rushdie's turning in divinity-class essays that were studded with fake quotes: "Salman couldn't be bothered to do the research, so he used to make them up. He had this authority called Professor I. Q. Gribb. I think eventually the chaplain caught on, but I don't remember what happened." When, for a scholarship exam, Rushdie was required to write a general essay—typical subjects were "My Most Exciting Holiday," "My Bicycle"—he elected to discourse on "Mediocrity." His classmates were impressed. "I didn't know what the word meant," one says. "I had to look it up in the dictionary. And Salman had written a whole essay on it."

Another Old Boy remembers Rushdie as "a great debater—he could argue black was white," and the school's Debating Society records cite several contributions from "A. S. Rushdie." In one debate, Rushdie argued against the motion that "this House would abolish Fagging" (the practice of treating younger students at school like servants) and is reported to have said that "without fagging . . . Rugbeians would be snobbish, self-centered and foppish." Other contributions were less frivolous. On the motion that "this House would never build another Empire," Rushdie "spoke of the Indian civilization and culture that Imperialism had destroyed, and the degradation of Indians under foreign rule." And in another, on the motion that "there are no good, brave causes left," he took the line that "peace was a good, brave cause."

On top of his debating skills, A. S. Rushdie also showed some promise as an actor, appearing in at least two productions: Friedrich Dürrenmatt's "The Physicists" and Arthur Watkyn's "Not in the Book." In this March, 1964, production, Rushdie played Pedro Juarez and "proved an excellent South American," evincing—according to the school's Play Annals—"the necessary suave aplomb. . . . His heart attack and death may have been slightly overacted but they were certainly effective."

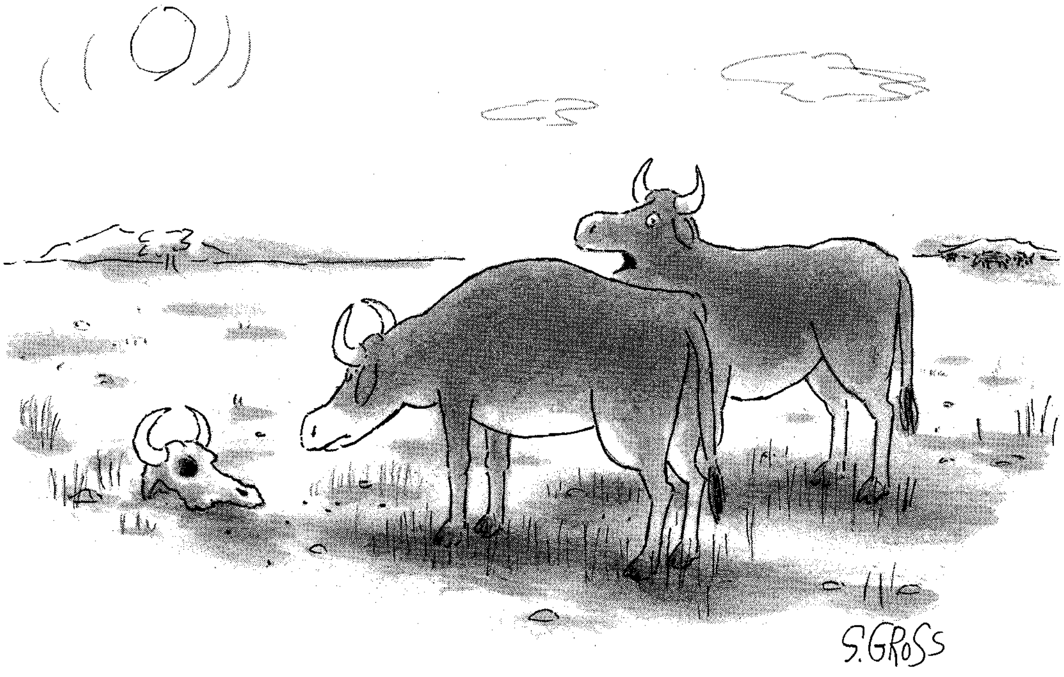
These jottings suggest that Rushdie was having a reasonably good time—or, at least, a cheerier time than the one he presented later on. So do his school reports, although in his second year it is noted that "either English food or English climate doesn't suit him." His overall academic record shows him more often than not in one of the top three places in his class, and the verdict on his final school year reads, "He has made excellent use of what Rugby has to give." He won a Queen's Medal for History—the highest school prize in that subject—and was offered a scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford: but he turned it down. "I think I'm the only person ever to turn down a Balliol scholarship." The difficulty was that he had already been offered a scholarship at King's College, Cambridge, which was his father's old college. Anis insisted that he go to King's.

RUSHDIE himself did not want to go to any English university. He had had enough of England. His schoolmates' memories have faded, but incidents that they recall now as boyish rough-and-tumble were for Rushdie memorable confrontations. There was, for instance, one debate—a mock General Election—in which he attacked a right-wing "candidate" who was urging stronger immigration laws. Rushdie asked if, as a black, he himself would be excluded under the proposed new rules. "You are not black" came the reply. "You are a peculiar brownish colour. But yes, you too would be denied entry to this country." And in an end-of-term "satirical" revue during his final year Rushdie heard himself lampooned:

> What is this shape 'midst the nebulous fog?
> Merely the resident Bradley House wog.

Rushdie had fathomed the mysteries of kippers, he had learned how to speak "goodandproper" English, he had passed his school exams. He had even turned down a scholarship at Balliol. His conquest of England was complete, and he had no wish to consolidate the spoils. He was ready to go home.

But where *was* home? For Anis Rushdie, in Bombay, things had been going from bad to worse. His business was in



"Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio."

ruins, and daily life in India had become increasingly precarious for Muslims. His drinking problem had got worse. In 1962, Anis and his family had followed Salman to England, become naturalized British citizens, and set up house in a flat in Kensington. In a short story called "The Courter," Rushdie portrays the move as typical of his father's authoritarian impulsiveness: "I had been at boarding school in England for a year or so when Abba took the decision to bring the family over. Like all his decisions, it was neither explained to nor discussed with anyone, not even my mother."

From Kensington, Anis was able to keep a close eye on his son's academic progress. When Rushdie failed chemistry at O level, Anis refused to speak to him until he had apologized. Sameen remembers the explosion:

> Salman's results came. Salman had failed! This man who never failed anything! Complete shock. And what my father said to him—I still remember—"You did it deliberately. You did it to spite me." I'm sure he meant that, because Salman had said that he didn't want to do Chemistry and my father said, "You have to." Salman said, "Couldn't I do a subject called Physics *with* Chemistry," and my father said, "No, you have to do a Physics paper and a Chemistry paper. You have to do them both." And there had been this big row. Then Salman failed it. My father couldn't believe that Salman couldn't pass Chemistry at O level if he wanted to.

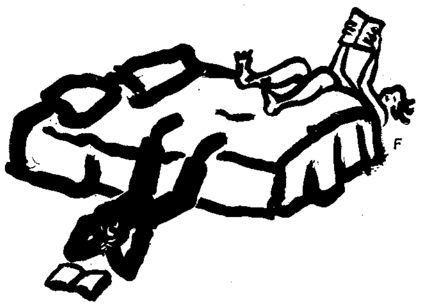
There was a similar eruption when Rushdie announced to his parents that he did not want to go to Cambridge. "He begged them. He really didn't want to go," Sameen recalls. "But they said: 'That's what it's been *for*. You *must* go.' " Apparently, Salman had never told his parents, or his sister, of his unhappiness at Rugby. "Never, never, never," Sameen says. There was a now lost work of Rushdie fiction about Rugby life, a short novel called "Terminal Report," but no one was allowed to read it at the time.

The Cambridge altercation took place in Pakistan. After dithering in England for two years, Anis had at last decided to "shift location" to Karachi (even though he was now the holder of a British passport). "As usual," according to "The Courter," "there were no discussions, no explanations, just the simple fiat." Worst of all, from Rushdie's point of view, Anis had sold the family's Bombay home. Sameen says, "When they broke the news to him that they had sold the house, he wept."

The choice, then, was no longer Cambridge or Bombay, England or India; it had become Cambridge or Karachi, England or Pakistan—and for Rushdie Pakistan was "a stain on the face of India." The India he dreamed of was the opposite of everything that Pakistan stood for. It was secular, multiplicitous, tolerant, hospitable. He could never forgive Karachi for not being Bombay. But where did he belong now: India or Pakistan? In August, 1965, the two countries went to war over Kashmir. Rushdie had gone "home" to Karachi for the summer at a time when both India's and Pakistan's Armies had claims on him. He had to make a choice—to which country did he owe his allegiance—and the pressure of making that choice almost undid him. "I didn't particularly feel India was my enemy, because we'd only very recently come to Pakistan. And yet if somebody's dropping bombs on you, there is really only one reaction that you can have toward them, which is not friendly." In the end, his parents more or less forcibly threw him on a plane to England.

In October, 1965, Rushdie arrived at King's College, Cambridge, to read for a degree in History. In Pakistan, students were demanding "a stricter, more Islamic society . . . more-rules-not-less." In England, students wanted sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Rushdie's Cambridge career ran from 1965 to 1968—the life span, some would say, of the authentic sixties. "It was a very good time to be at Cambridge," he has said. "I ceased to be a conservative snob under the influence of the Vietnam War and dope." He saw himself as having been "radicalized" by his experience at Rugby, and, by his own account, he fell for the whole sixties package:

> In those days everybody had better things to do than read. There was the music and there were the movies and there was also, don't forget, the world to change. Like many of my contemporaries I spent my student years under the spell of Buñuel, Godard, Ray, Wajda, Welles, Bergman, Kurosawa, Jancsó, Antonioni, Dylan, Lennon, Jagger, Laing, Marcuse, and, inevitably, the two-headed fellow known to Grass readers as Marxengels.



While there is no record of Rushdie's having been arrested at anti-Vietnam demonstrations, there were signs of his now notorious spikiness of manner. Professor John Dunn, of King's College, recalls his former student as "very self-assured, independent, uncompromising, not overwhelmed by modesty. I vividly remember the sense of personal confrontation I had with him. He was not staggeringly clever by Cambridge standards—just clever. We have lots of clever people here."

Arthur Hibbert, another King's tutor, has a vague memory of his former student. Hibbert it was, though, who set Rushdie on a path that ultimately led to "The Satanic Verses." In his final year at Cambridge, Rushdie had chosen a special subject: Mohammed and the rise of Islam. But only five people turned up, and the lecturer cancelled the course. Rushdie persisted and went to see Hibbert, his director of studies. According to Rushdie, Hibbert said, "I'm not a career specialist in Islam, in early Islamic history, but I am a medievalist and I do know quite a lot about it, so if you would be happy for me to supervise you, I'll supervise you." Rushdie ended up being the only person in the university studying the course. "I remember coming across the Incident of the Satanic Verses, thinking, that's interesting, there's something there, you know . . . and put it away in my head."

Cambridge in the sixties, although it had its leftist pockets, was still a contented seat of privilege. There were more hearties than hippies, and the posh ex-public-school boys could effortlessly keep themselves aloof from the down-at-heels students from state schools. The gentlemanly traditions still flourished: private dining clubs, May Balls, the Boat Race, Twickers. Rushdie himself once recalled, "It was a very strange time at Cambridge. There was a mixture of the old and the new. There were a lot of chinless wonders in blazers who threw people into the river at night. I'm sure they're still there—they endure like the earth." And yet Rushdie, as a well-off Rugbeian, may have felt some affinities with the university smart set. Simply because of his school background, he is likely to have been more at ease with the wealthy sons of Eton, Harrow, and the like than with working-class boys from the state-aided grammar schools. One King's contemporary has said:

> He was rather pompous and we always felt that he was trying to have it both ways—be a representative of the oppressed people of the Third World and yet also glory in the public-school gloss around him. A lot of us were grammar-school lads and, however he has tried subsequently to present himself as the outsider, we actually felt alienated from him by his education.

Another Cambridge contemporary, not from King's, speaks of Rushdie's "radical chic."

Like many bright students, Rushdie approached his subject not in any kind of methodical way but accidentally, haphazardly, in the way of someone who likes to read. He went to the cinema five times a week and developed a more than passing interest in the occult. Unsurprisingly, his academic record showed a distinct falling off from his straight-arrow performance at school. He ended up with a 2:2—a degree well below the average, low enough certainly to have barred him from postgraduate research. Not that he gave any sign of wishing to become a Cambridge don: by the time he took his Finals, Rushdie—who had played in student productions of Ionesco, Brecht, Ben Jonson, and others, and had been, as well, "a tiny bulb in the Footlights" (the famous Cambridge revue)—had been bitten by the theatre bug.

If he had been asked in 1968 what career he had in mind, he would have said that he planned to be an actor. "Actor," it seems, was easier to say than "writer": "I knew even then that I wanted to write, but I kept quiet about it. I was afraid to say it for a time, even to myself."

Rushdie the would-be actor, the secret writer, finally returned to the confines of Karachi, his new Oriental home. He went there, he says, because, among other reasons, he had a return air ticket. (As it happens, he ended up driving overland.) And he had nowhere else to go. The visit was a failure on all fronts. Anis had embarked on a new business venture, a towel factory, and had high hopes that his returning son, B.A. (Cantab.), would run it. Sameen recalls, "My father would take him to see the towel factory and Salman used to go there gritting his teeth, saying 'I'm not going to do this.' 'But I'm setting it up for *you.*' 'Well, please don't, because I'm not going to run it.' "

Instead, Rushdie took a job with Pakistan's new television service. He persuaded Karachi TV to let him produce and act in Edward Albee's "The Zoo Story." The play is short, it has a cast of two, and the only prop required is a park bench. The proposal was accepted. Before production could begin, though, there had to be a series of "censorship conferences." An Albee remark about the disgustingness of pork hamburgers was seized on by the censors. "Pork," they said, is a "four-letter word." Rushdie argued that Albee's hamburger remark was "superb anti-pork propaganda" and should stay. " 'You don't see,' the executive told me. . . . 'The word "pork" may not be spoken on Pakistan television.' And that was that." He also had to cut a line about God being a colored queen who wears a kimono and plucks his eyebrows.

The same kind of thing happened when Rushdie agreed to write an article for a small magazine about his "impressions on returning home":

> I remember very little about this piece (mercifully, memory is a censor, too), except that it was not at all political. It tended, I think, to linger melodramatically, on images of dying horses with flies settling on their eyeballs. You can imagine the sort of thing. Anyway, I submitted my piece, and a couple of weeks later was told by the magazine's editor that the Press Council, the national censors, had banned it completely. Now it so happened that I had an uncle on the Press Council, and in a very unradical, string-pulling mood I thought I'd just go and see him and everything would be sorted out. He looked tired when I confronted him. "Publication," he said immovably, "would not be in your best interest." I never found out why.

In Pakistan, he discovered, censorship was "everywhere, inescapable, permitting no appeal." There was "no room to breathe." So it was back to England and the sixties, or what was left of them. In London, Rushdie set up as a struggling artist. A struggling actor or a struggling writer? "A struggling both," he says. It seems that he was now ready to come clean about the writing.

Sameen was studying in London, so it was agreed that she and her brother—together with some Cambridge friends of his—should rent a house in Fulham. Here, for a time, a jolly-commune atmosphere prevailed. Jenny Richards, one of the Cambridge friends, recalls the house as "chaotic and great fun. There were lots of arguments—who cleans the bath, who shops. And about partners. We had din-

SHOWCASE

SCOTTISH EFFLORESCENCE

Even before the novelist James Kelman won the 1994 Booker Prize, there was a general feeling in the United Kingdom that the action had moved north—that the most interesting writing of the moment was coming from the misty regions on the other side of Hadrian's Wall. The eleven Scottish writers—six novelists and five poets—who assembled for the photograph on the following page are largely responsible for this impression.

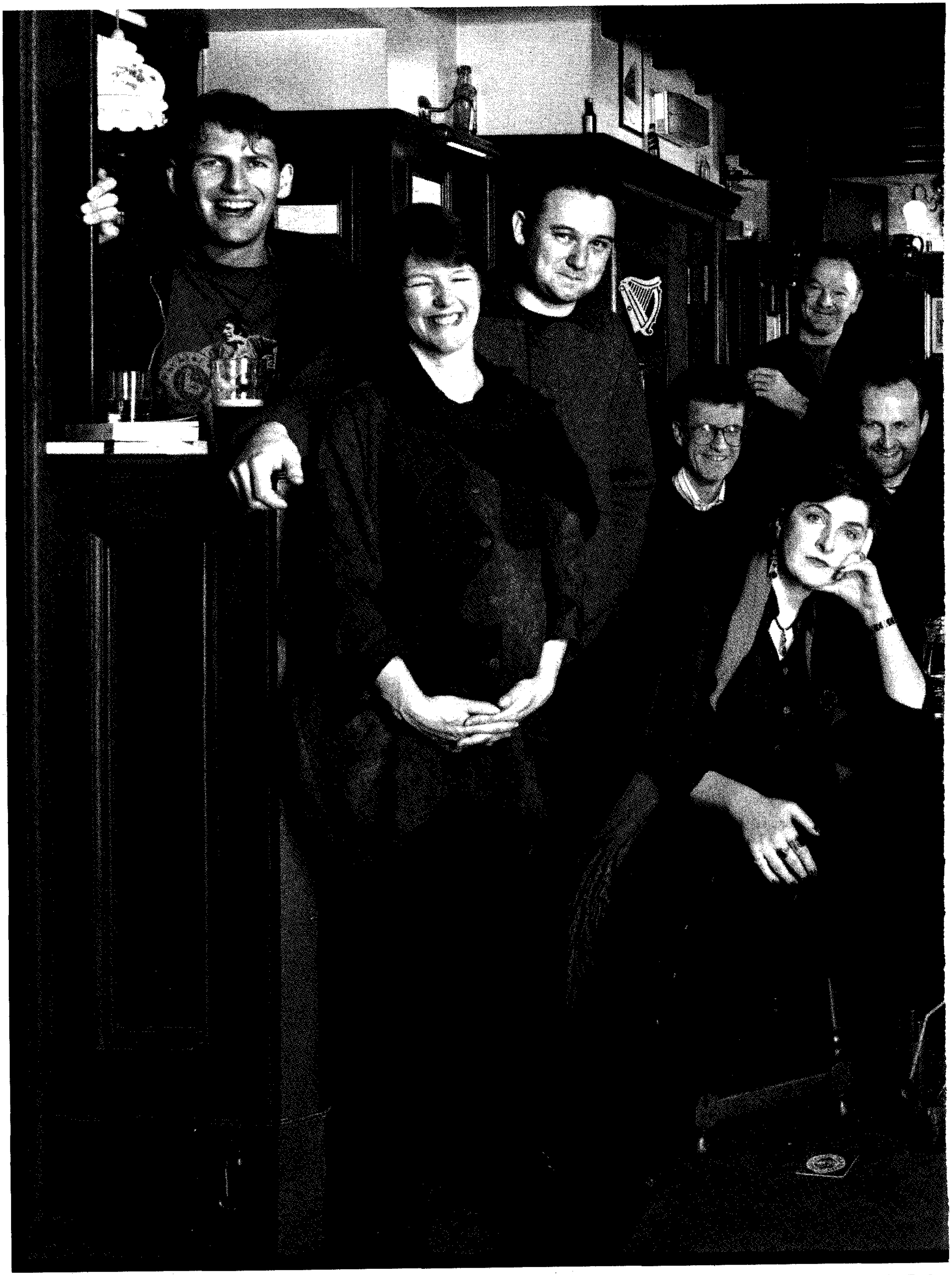
At the popular crest of the new wave is Irvine Welsh, who recently occupied the top three places on the Scottish best-seller list—simultaneously—with his acidic tales of dope fiends and deadbeats roving the parts of Edinburgh tourists do well to avoid. Welsh's first novel, "Trainspotting," is being made into a movie by the team that made "Shallow Grave."

The other young writers in the photograph practice their trade a bit less flamboyantly. Janice Galloway ("Foreign Parts") and A. L. Kennedy ("So I Am Glad") cover similar territory—the redundancy of men, the confederacy of women—but in tone and approach they are sauerkraut and cream. Alan Warner and Duncan McLean are based at a remove from urban Scotland—Warner on the rugged west coast, McLean in the Orkney Islands—and both depict rural life in all its modern grimness. McLean's second novel, "Bunker Man," is a hard-core tale of twisted masculinity, while Warner's début novel, "Morvern Callar," features, in the words of Irvine Welsh, "a fearlessly cool and sassy party chick propelled by her own delicious morality."

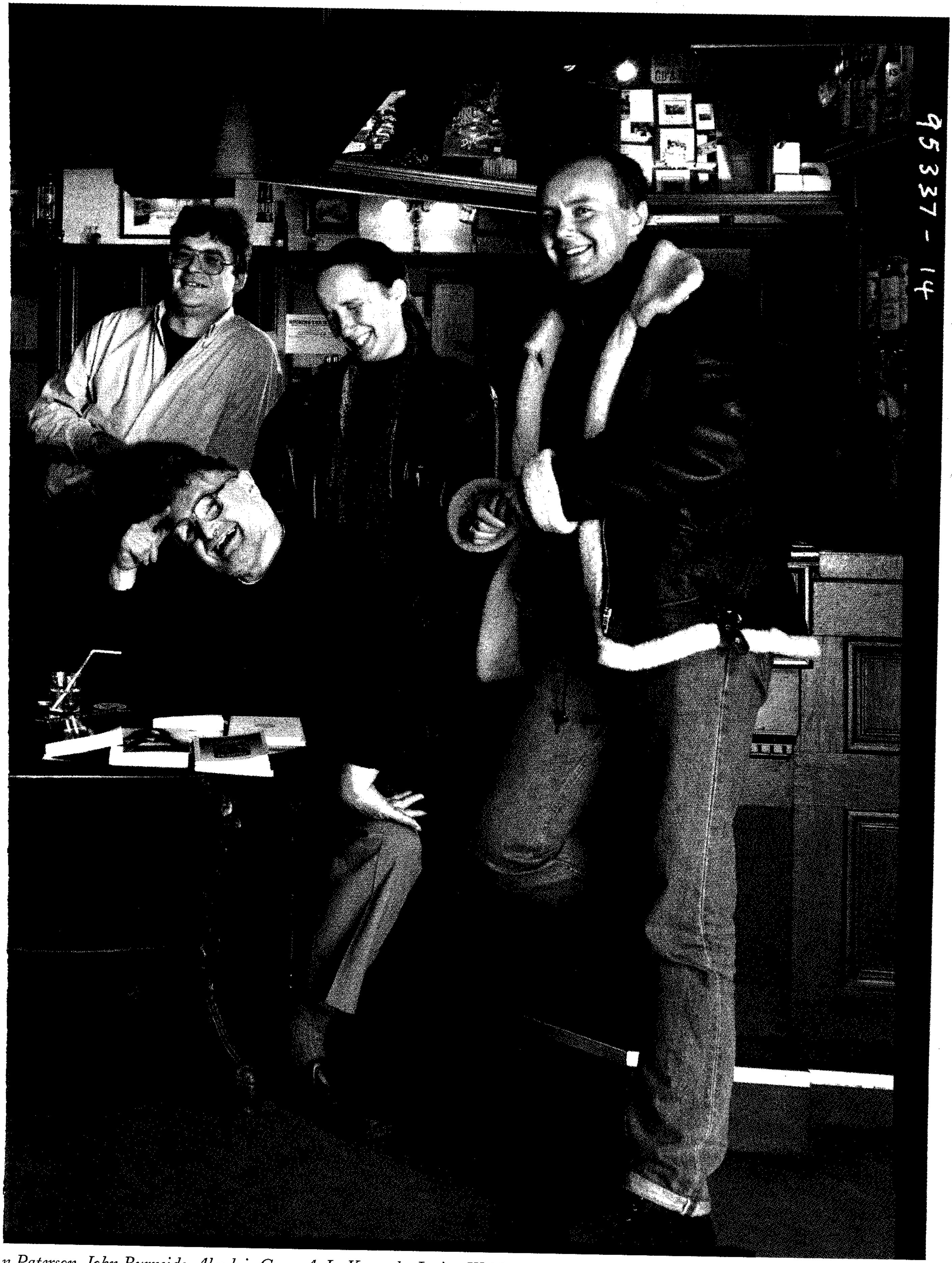
The poets Don Paterson, Robert Crawford, Kathleen Jamie, John Burnside, and Robin Robertson tend to write in the Queen's English, resisting the trend among novelists to delve into the demotic.

The grand old man of the Scottish renaissance is Alasdair Gray, whose 1981 novel, "Lanark," moved Anthony Burgess to describe him as the best Scottish novelist since Walter Scott. —Alan Taylor

PHOTOGRAPH
BY RICHARD AVEDON



Alan Warner, Kathleen Jamie, Duncan McLean, Robert Crawford, Janice Galloway, Robin Rober



n Paterson, *John Burnside, Alasdair Gray, A. L. Kennedy, Irvine Welsh. Glasgow, November 28, 1995.*

ner parties all the time. Salman was a great raconteur and bon vivant. Great wordsmith. There were parlor games, and he was brilliant at things like 'the worst movie titles': 'The Second Man,' 'Around the World in Eighty-nine Days.' "

Back in Karachi, Anis was not thrilled to learn that his son was living like a Western hippie. Sameen says, "He thought it was a disgrace that Salman should be living on the dole, but he refused to support him while he did this thing called writing. I think Salman always held that against him—for not supporting him, even emotionally." In the Fulham house, Rushdie began writing his first novel. "When he told my father that he wanted to write, my father said, 'What on earth would *you* write about? You should get a job like everybody else. These are all excuses for not wanting to work.' "

In fact, Rushdie did have a job of sorts, appearing now and then as an actor in productions at the Oval House, in Kennington. Dusty Hughes, an old Cambridge friend, was then directing shows but was not particularly encouraging about Rushdie's career. In "Viet Rock"—a play about the Vietnam War—Rushdie was cast in a variety of roles, including that of a Vietcong soldier: "It would be unkind to say that he was totally without talent—perhaps that's the best way to put it." In a multimedia rock show, "Rainy Day Woman," Rushdie played a drag queen, but evidently refused to shave off his John Lennon mustache. "I think that may have been the beginning of his prima-donna phase. I don't think it did him any good. So far as I know, that was the end of his theatrical career."

Dusty Hughes, it turned out, had a superior career plan. During the day, he worked for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. Hughes remembers, "Salman visited me and saw this plush office, the desk covered in telephones, and learned of my 'huge salary,' as it seemed then, and he said, 'How do you get *this*?' " Hughes advised him that all he had to do was "take the test," which meant—in Rushdie's case—writing a jingle about the merits of car seat belts. Rushdie set his text to the music of Chuck Berry's "No Particular Place to Go."

Rushdie failed the test, or so he says (Hughes thinks that he passed), but he had heard the chink of easy money and soon afterward found work with a small agency called Sharp MacManus. There he seems to have spent most of his time sitting at the feet of a "voluptuous" (his word) colleague, Fay Coventry (who later married Rushdie's future publisher at Jonathan Cape, Tom Maschler). "Fay moved in bookish circles" and would depress Rushdie with her tales of "the smart literary weekends she'd attended." He was envious but knew that the only way he would ever get his hands on some of *that* would be to complete the book he was working on.

Rushdie quit Sharp MacManus and resumed work on his novel. Completed in 1971, it was entitled "The Book of the Pir" and featured a Muslim guru, in some unnamed Eastern land, who gets taken up by a military junta and installed as the figurehead President of its corrupt regime. It was a strong enough plot, but it was written in what the author calls "sub-Joyce." After being rebuffed by various literary agents ("It couldn't even achieve *that!*" Rushdie says of it), the book was set aside, and Rushdie decided to go back to advertising. The same year, he joined Ogilvy & Mather as a copywriter. His immediate superior was Keith Ravenscroft. Ravenscroft recalls:

> My boss said to me, "You're getting this new man. He's a bit unusual but I think he'll be all right." By unusual I think he meant that Salman was black and he was Cambridge and that he was long-haired and more intelligent than most people. Ogilvy & Mather was known as the Ministry of Advertising. It was a big, reputable, quite solid sort of place and has spawned some good people, like Fay Weldon.

Other Rushdie colleagues included Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy (the author of "The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny"), the poet Edwin Brock, and Franc Roddam, who later directed the film "Quadrophenia." Brock says, "Most copywriters then were writing novels or poems under the desk."

One of Rushdie's tasks was to prepare a weekly commercial for the *Daily Mirror*—a thirty-second scenario built around the *Mirror's* big story of the week. "Salman was very good," Ravenscroft says, "very instinctive and cerebral, although he was probably too bright to be doing it. You have to reduce yourself to a middle-range sensibility because that's what your consumers have, largely." Rushdie did manage to reduce himself from time to time, coming up with catchphrases like "naughty but nice" (for the Milk Marketing Board's promotion of cream cakes) and "irresistibubble," for Aero chocolate bars.

In 1970, Rushdie had met his future wife, Clarissa Luard, a "very well-bred English-rose type," says an acquaintance from those days, and the model, presumably, for Pamela Lovelace in "The Satanic Verses." Readers of Samuel Richardson will remember that in "Clarissa" the heroine is ruined by the merciless rake Lovelace, and that "Pamela" is another Richardson narrative of virtue under siege:

> Saladin Chamcha met Pamela Lovelace five and a half days before the end of the 1960s, when women still wore bandannas in their hair. She stood at the centre of a room full of Trotskyist actresses and fixed him with eyes so bright, so bright. He monopolized her all evening and she never stopped smiling and she left with another man. He went home to dream of her eyes and smile, the slenderness of her, her skin. He pursued her for two years. England yields her treasures with reluctance.

Clarissa Luard remembers Rushdie telling her that he first saw her at a rally at the Albert Hall. She—in "purple bell-bottoms and with flowers in my hair"—was working with a group that was "raising consciousness about Biafra." According to Clarissa, it was a year after the Albert Hall sighting that the pair finally met face to face:

> We saw each other at a party, and he asked a mutual friend to give a dinner party for me. Then we had a date and went to a Santana concert. Then we saw each other once a week. I had a boyfriend and he had a girlfriend. It was clandestine for about two years. He was pursuing me. I was very flattered because he was this very clever person, a bit awe-inspiring. If I was being analytical . . . My father committed suicide when I was sixteen, and I suspect I was missing a father figure. He knew a lot and could talk a lot and could teach me a great deal about literature. I was very uneducated.

Clarissa's family was—or had been—wealthy. They were upper-middle-class and very British. "Salman is marrying the Raj," a friend would later say. In 1973, Clarissa's mother emigrated to Spain, leaving her daughter, Rushdie, and a female lodger to occupy her Lower Belgrave Street flat, next door to what had been the Luards' family home. Rushdie's new residence was just off Eaton Square, an address of stunning grandeur.

It was in Lower Belgrave Street that Rushdie wrote "Grimus," his first published work of fiction. Liz Calder, who

Johann Gutenberg
Mädchen

had just begun working as an editor at Victor Gollancz, happened to be the lodger in the Luard flat, and she remembers that she first heard of the novel when Gollancz announced a competition for the best new science-fiction novel. She says:

> I knew Salman was writing things, and I was trying to ignore it. It could only be a source of embarrassment, I thought. But when he heard about the competition he said, "I'm going to enter it." And my heart sank. Anyway, he finished it and showed it to me, and I liked it. I responded to its extraordinary use of language. I mean, it was just wild. I hadn't read anything like it. And although it was barmy in some ways, all over the place, I thought it was amazing. So he entered it. There were three judges: Arthur C. Clarke, Brian Aldiss, and Kingsley Amis. Kingsley violently disliked it. So it wasn't going to win. But I thought, Well, I'll try and get it published anyway. We offered Salman some paltry sum.

To celebrate, Rushdie and Clarissa took a five-month trip to India and Pakistan. The proofs of "Grimus" reached him in Karachi. He also, on this trip, saw Bombay again, and Delhi and Kashmir, the places of his childhood. "I loved India!" Clarissa exclaims. "The people, the smells, the colors, the history, the architecture!" She was less thrilled by Pakistan, where on at least one occasion she and Rushdie had stones thrown at them. "I wasn't dressing badly," Clarissa says. "I knew about the country and I was wearing long skirts. But I wasn't wearing the *dupatta*." In one town, a driver tried to run them down. However, she was given a warm welcome by the family:

> There I was, a strange English person, unmarried, travelling with their precious son. We were chaperoned heavily. We were never alone in the same room for an instant. I didn't like Pakistan, but I liked them and their house, which was huge, grand, magnificent. They lived in some style: a lot of servants, swimming pool in the garden. It was a bit shabby, though. Salman's father was not as well off as he had been.

She was aware of the tension between son and father: "There was a lot of bad feeling. Salman's father adored him but had difficulty showing it. That's the impression I got as an outsider. And I don't think Salman picked up on that. But he'll probably say that I am wrong."

Returning to England for the publication of "Grimus," Rushdie may already have known what was wrong with his first book. He has called it "a kind of fantasy novel set in an imaginary island, out of space and time," and so it is, but it is also laboriously mannered. Esoteric knowhow is exhibited throughout—hypnosis, numerology, time travel, black magic, pseudo physics. In the cast of characters, wordy weirdos abound: seers, gnomes, and so on. The novel has a few good jokes: I. Q. Gribb, of Rugby fame, makes an appearance as the author of an All-Purpose Quotable Philosophy, and there is an amusing Wild West bore called One-Track Peckenpaw. In a brothel called House of the Rising Son, the prostitutes have funny names like Boom-Boom de Sade, Kamala Sutra, and Lee Kok Fook, but the sex scenes are inept. It seems unfair to go on, especially since Rushdie has more or less disowned the book, but if "Grimus" had *not* failed we might never have had "Midnight's Children."

After all, despite its flamboyant self-display, "Grimus" was a forbiddingly anonymous affair: one could deduce from it almost nothing about the author's background. "I must try and write something from much closer to my own knowledge of the world," Rushdie decided after India. "Something which is—where I know what's happening and where I know the place and time." In 1974, he asked Ogilvy & Mather to let him work part time. He needed time to write, he said. The agency was not entirely happy with the deal, but Rushdie, according to Ravenscroft, stood firm: "It's very simple. You pay me good money and I do my best work for three days a week and then I do other things. That's the only basis on which I am prepared to work."

We get a hint here of what Ravenscroft calls Salman's "very, very strong sense of self. Quite unshakable. Work and dignity. The right to be as he is and to say what he says." From Clarissa Luard's point of view, this aspect of his personality was sometimes hard to understand:

> Salman is very explosive. When we were first living together, I never knew how long we'd be staying at any dinner party. There would always be these violent arguments and out we'd be storming, yet again. It didn't occur to me not to storm out with him. I thought my role was to support my man, to do whatever he did. They were ridiculous arguments. He was quite shouty. . . . He didn't drink. Salman hates drink, because his father drank so much. It was just pure belief in himself: a conviction and determination that certain things *are*. I re-

member a long-standing relationship with a dear friend ending because Salman suddenly said, "You can't stay in my house if you don't like such-and-such a writer."

IN April, 1976, Rushdie and Clarissa Luard married, in London's Caxton Hall, and soon afterward they bought a house in Kentish Town, in North London. The house was spacious, but semiderelict. "There were holes in the roof," Rushdie later told a columnist. "Dry rot and damp everywhere and it had electricity on the ground floor only." He set to work. Friends were astonished to discover a new Rushdie talent: he knew how to "do up" houses. "They never thought I could do anything practical, but I learned as I went along." He converted two of five bedrooms into a workroom for himself. He restored fireplaces and cornices, sanded floorboards, repainted the walls. "Once I got into it, I became quite manic."

No. 19 Raveley Street was not quite Windsor Villa, but it meant a lot. And he was through with upper-crust Belgravia. In Kentish Town, Rushdie the immigrant found himself living in a different sort of London, a London whose "race problem" he had read about but had rarely witnessed close at hand. In this London, citizens who hailed from Pakistan or Bangladesh, or even India, were strictly second class and made to know it. On the subject of race prejudice Rushdie had sometimes had to bite his tongue. He had kept silent when a jingle was rejected because the singer "sounded black," or when black children had been excluded from feel-good commercials about sweets. "I found the prejudice of senior executives in British industry quite appalling," he wrote later, and in "The Satanic Verses" Hal Valance, a top adman, is portrayed as a bigoted grotesque.

In 1977, Rushdie became involved in a local North London project to create jobs for Bangladeshi immigrants. The experience revealed an England that had forgotten all about "fair play, tolerance, decency and equality." Racism, he came to believe, had "seeped into every part" of British culture. Britain had "imported" a new Empire, a community of subject peoples. He found that in certain areas, like Camden, Southall, and Brixton, there was no point in blacks' calling in the law. The law was white. The police offer the immigrant "threats instead of protection, and the courts offer small hope of redress," he wrote. "Britain is now two entirely different worlds, and the one you inhabit is determined by the color of your skin." Rushdie's own skin, of course, was not dark enough to be targeted by street thugs or by racist cops. "I have this accidental fair skin, speak with an English accent, and don't go around in Nehru topees." His own persecutions were subtle, middle-class, well meant:

> The phrase that really gets me angry is this thing about being "more English than the English." It is used as if it should be offensive. I point out to these people that if there was an English person living in India who adopted Indian dress, who had learnt to speak Urdu or Hindi or Bengali fluently without an accent, nobody would accuse him of having lost his culture. They would be flattered and pleased that the language had been acquired so efficiently. And they would see it as a compliment to themselves. But they wouldn't accuse him of having betrayed his origins.

It would be several years before Rushdie tackled these British matters in his fiction. In 1977, his "writing self" was living somewhere else—in India. His next book, he had vowed, would be rooted in personal experience. He would go back where he had come from.

His first effort was entitled "Madame Rama," and its main character bears some resemblance to Indira Gandhi, whose state-of-emergency repressions had left Rushdie disillusioned and indignant: Nehru's legacy betrayed by Nehru's daughter. He offered "Madame Rama" to Gollancz, but, to his surprise, Liz Calder turned it down. "It had some great stuff in it," she concedes, and points out that "he plundered it for 'Midnight's Children.' "

For a while, Rushdie floundered. But something about India had been in progress ever since his trip there. "I spent many months trying simply to recall as much of the Bombay of the 1950s and 1960s as I could":

> I found myself remembering what clothes people had worn on certain days, and school scenes, and whole passages of Bombay dialogue verbatim, or so it seemed; I even remembered advertisements, film-posters, the neon Jeep sign on Marine Drive, toothpaste ads for Binaca and for Kolynos, and a footbridge over the local railway line which bore, on one side, the legend "Esso puts a tiger in your tank" and, on the other, the curiously contradictory admonition: "Drive like Hell and you will get there."

He knew that he was tapping "a rich seam," but he was blocked. The breakthrough came when he switched from the third person to the first person. "I've always remembered this as the moment I became a writer," he says. "Midnight's Children" was completed in June of 1979, two weeks before the birth of Rushdie's son, Zafar. According to Clarissa, "it was a race between us to see who would produce first."

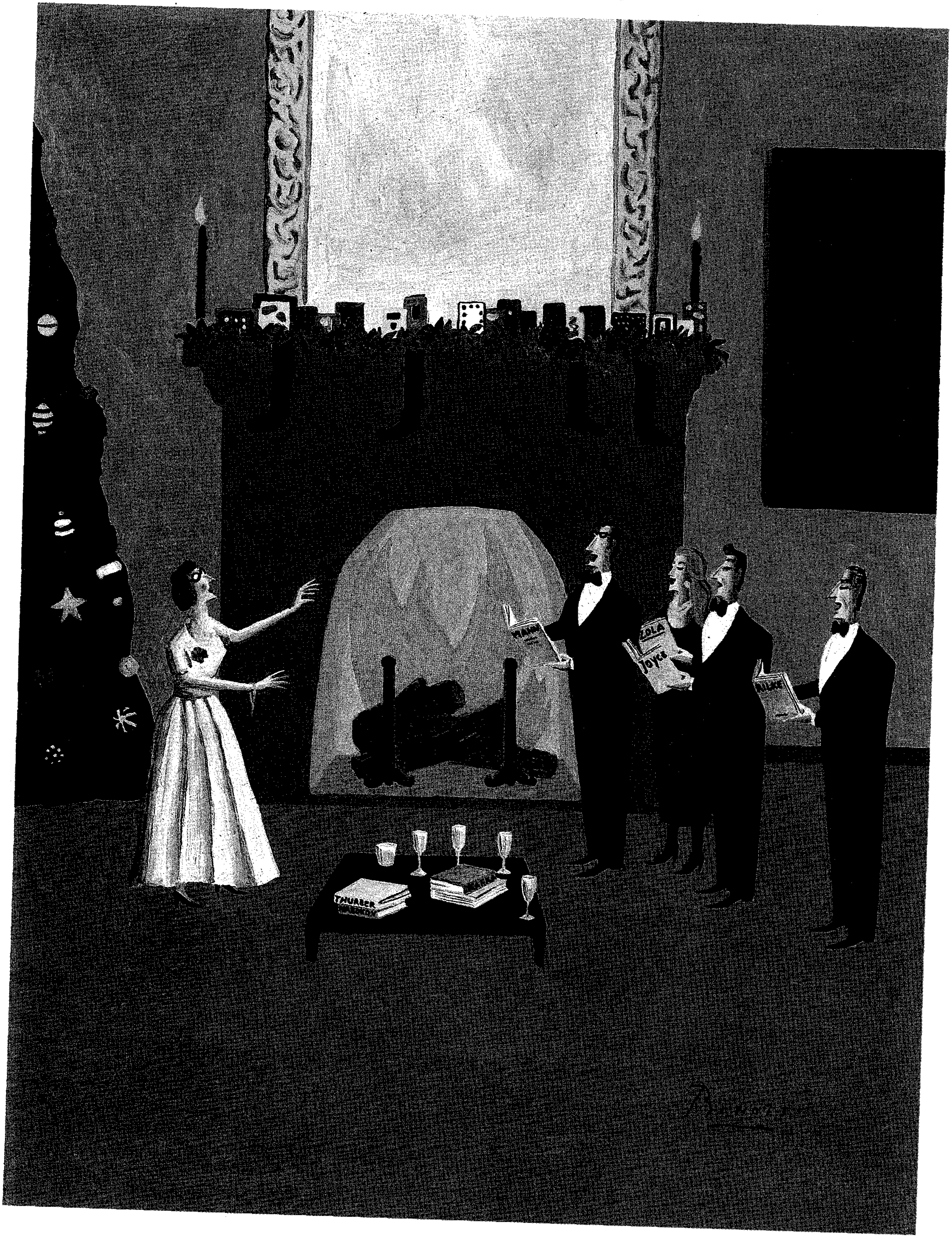
BY this time, Liz Calder had moved from Gollancz to Jonathan Cape, then London's most prestigious house for literary fiction, and she wanted to take Rushdie with her. As a newcomer, Calder thought that she needed backing from within the firm. The first report she got on "Midnight's Children" was scathing: "this fat ramble round Indian Rushdie's mind." Subsequent opinions, though, were powerfully in favor of the book. "So we took it on," Calder says, "and Tom Maschler read it and told us all we didn't realize what we had got: this was a work of genius."

In spite of Maschler's enthusiasm, Cape printed only seventeen hundred and fifty copies of the book, and at the firm's 1980 Christmas party Rushdie had no sense of being the focus of a "buzz." No one knew who he was. When he approached Martin Amis, a Cape celebrity, Amis, he says, "just turned his back." (Amis, by the way, has "no memory of snubbing Salman," and says, "It feels doubly improbable to me, because I seemed to be the only person on earth who admired his first novel, 'Grimus.' It is easy to imagine him feeling vulnerable and sensitive at that stage in his life. Shiva Naipaul used to consider himself snubbed if he glimpsed you from the top of a bus on Regent Street and you neglected to jump on board.")

"Midnight's Children" was published first by Knopf in the United States, and here Rushdie, on a short visit—paid for by himself—enjoyed his first taste of literary glamour. Bob Gottlieb, his editor at Knopf, who took him to the ballet, remembers Rushdie on this visit as "enthusiastic about everything, interested, charming, hopeful—he knew he had written a wonderful book." Most of the reviews were rapturous. *The New York Review of Books* called "Midnight's Children" "one of the most important [nov-

SKETCHBOOK · BY BENOÎT VAN INNIS

LITERARY CAROLS


MANN
ZOLA
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THURBER

els] to come out of the English-speaking world in this generation."

In Britain, there was a blizzard of superlatives—"major," "magical, artistic," "brilliant," and "fantastic." Although Rushdie acknowledged as his forebears some pretty hefty Western names—Cervantes, Sterne, Grass, Melville, Kafka—most Western readers were dazzled by the book's sheer foreignness. Or, rather, they were astonished that material so alien could be delivered with such Westernized panache.

This is how the book begins:

> I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more . . . On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity. I was left entirely without a say in the matter. I, Saleem Sinai, later variously called Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha and even Piece-of-the-Moon, had become heavily embroiled in Fate—at the best of times a dangerous sort of involvement. And I couldn't even wipe my own nose at the time.

V. S. Pritchett, reviewing the book in this magazine, described the author as "a master of perpetual storytelling," but also seemed to have difficulty reconciling an Indian novel with what seemed to be a novel so *not* Indian: "There are strange Western echoes, of the irony of Sterne in 'Tristram Shandy'—that early nonlinear writer. . . . This is very odd in an Indian novel!" Indian readers had no such difficulty. For them, the book was like a gift from Heaven. Anita Desai has described the Indian novel's predicament, pre-Rushdie. With Independence, she believes, English-language novelists in India felt irrelevant. How to be "post-colonial" in genres bequeathed by the colonial oppressor? Rushdie, she says, showed them the way forward. In the summer of 1981, Desai was at a reading that Rushdie gave at the India International Centre, in New Delhi, a reading in a "small auditorium that drew a crowd so unexpectedly large that it spilled out under the trees and loudspeakers had to be set up to broadcast his voice, a voice that everyone present recognized instantly as being the voice of a new age: strong, original, and demanding of attention." There was, she says,

> a kind of euphoria in the air to greet him. For the first time an Indian writer had found the language to say things which we had all been through but had still not found the words for. After that, I think every young Indian writer tried to write like Salman. The whole next generation of Indian writers started off by writing their own "Midnight's Children." The effect his writing had on Indian writers was somehow to loosen their tongues.

A similar experience occurred in Cambridge, Rushdie's alma mater, and the site of his first reading. He was warned beforehand by the organizer not to expect much of a turnout; after all, he was an unknown writer. But when they reached the art gallery where the reading was to be given it was packed—with Asians. At one point, the organizer has recalled,

> a woman in a sari stood up. Her voice cracked as she spoke: and she wanted to express her gratitude to Salman Rushdie for writing India; that was the actual construction she used. "No one," she said, "has written about India as you have. You have written my India. I will always be grateful to you."

BOOKS
USED NEW
HELL'S BIBLIOPHILES
HELL'S BIBLIOPHILES

Mukul Kesavan, a student at the time, described the reading as "a religious experience." Fourteen years later, Kesavan was to publish his own "Midnight's Children"-inspired novel, "Looking Through Glass."

"Midnight's Children" was less happily received by the author's family in Karachi. Anis was shocked by his son's scornfully freewheeling way with family secrets. Rushdie had taken incidents and personalities from the Rushdie family history and mischievously reimagined them. Anis found himself portrayed as Ahmed Sinai, "a man over whom, even in his moments of triumph, there hung the stink of future failure, the odour of a wrong turning that was just around the corner, an aroma which could not be washed away by his frequent baths." Ahmed is a ludicrously inept businessman, inadequate in marriage, a drinker, a bully, and a self-deceiver. It is a savage portrait—fiction as revenge. "They were all shocked," Rushdie says. His father more or less "disowned" him, even at this moment of his Western triumph.

THE triumph was made official, so to speak, in October of 1981, when "Midnight's Children" won the lucrative Booker Prize, Britain's top award for fiction. Rushdie was overjoyed. Liz Calder has talked of his "un-British" manner, "excitable, passionate, outspoken." Rushdie had been given what he wanted. Life had changed.

According to Clarissa, "it changed hugely. Hugely. We'd always had a very sociable life but it became crazy":

> Our life just went haywire. We were fêted—well, I wasn't fêted, but I was brought along, too. It was extraordinary to see the extent to which that sort of thing comes into action, as soon as you win. . . . Salman revelled in the success. [His writing] mattered so much to him, and it was being recognized. But we were very young. . . . I probably didn't see what was happening very clearly.

Even the intensely loyal Keith Ravenscroft detected troubling developments:

> I remember going to a dinner party at his house, not long after "Midnight's Children." There were all these people who revered him. I'm not saying they weren't genuine. They were literary folk, and he was holding forth on something and everyone was listening reverently. I thought it was crap and said so. I said, "Come on, you silly old tart, that's rubbish." And there was this horrified silence round the table, that someone they'd never heard of, who—so far as they knew—hadn't written anything, was laying into the maestro.

"Midnight's Children" was translated into more than a dozen languages, and by the time Rushdie paid a return visit to his homeland—or homelands—he was a world name. He told the New York *Times Book Review* that he had been nervous about returning:

> In Pakistan there is suspicion because I'm Indian and in India because I'm Pakistani. Both sides wish to claim me. Both sides find it hard that I don't reject the other side. So I was expecting hostility or fear, and instead what happened was an extraordinary emotional event. It wasn't just that the audiences for my lectures were very large, but that there were these great waves of affection. Mostly from young people. The book was written as a way of reclaiming India and this was like India and Pakistan doing the same thing back.

Increasingly, over the next year or so, Rushdie came to see himself in public terms. Polemics that had previously been the stuff of dinner-table bust-ups were now expressed in magazines or on TV. Rushdie had no doubts about the writer's role: it was essentially subversive. He summed it up in an essay about Günter Grass: "Go for broke. Always try and do too much. Dispense with safety nets. Take a deep breath before you begin talking. Aim for the stars. Keep grinning. Be bloody minded. Argue with the world."

In "Midnight's Children" Rushdie enjoyed toying with the private lives of public figures. When Indira Gandhi was reported to be planning a libel action against the book, Rushdie was pleased that she had read it. Normally, he had said, she "subsists on a diet of Mills & Boon romances." In the event, Mrs. Gandhi won her libel action but was assassinated before a new, expurgated text could be printed.

Also buoyantly lampooned in "Midnight's Children" are various high-up Pakistani politicos and generals, and in Rushdie's next book, "Shame," published in 1983, it was their turn to occupy center stage. The tone is different, though. In "Midnight's Children," even the most wounding thrusts are tempered by an antic inwardness; there is a sense of We're-in-this-together, this madhouse, this abundance. In "Shame," there is no love of Pakistan: "a failure of the dreaming mind." And in Rushdie's skewering of the country's leaders there is no sense of disappointed affection. His version of Zia-ul-Haq ("Old Razor Guts") has no redeeming features: Zia's "Islamization programme" is a front for workaday repression. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto comes off slightly better: he at least has brains. Bhutto's daughter Benazir—"the virgin Ironpants"—represents the future: a future of "arrests, retribution, trials, hangings, blood, a new cycle of shamelessness and shame." "Shame" was quickly banned in Pakistan. (When Zia met his death, in August of 1988, Rushdie was reported to have said, "Dead dictators are my specialty. I discovered to my horror that all the political figures most featured in my writing—Mrs. G, Sanjay Gandhi, Bhutto, Zia—have now come to sticky ends. It's the grand slam, really. This is a service I can perform, perhaps. A sort of literary contract.")

In Britain and America, "Shame" was comprehensively acclaimed, not least for the wizardry of its technique. Susan Sontag, who regards Rushdie as a major talent ("I don't think there's an American writer better than he is"), speaks of "Shame" 's "elegance"—"It's sardonic, witty, full of fancy."

In September, "Shame" was short-listed for the Booker Prize. Nobody had won the Booker twice, and Rushdie had reason to believe that he might pull off this coup: none of the other titles on the short list had brought reviewers to their knees. Yet the prize went to a little-known South African, J. M. Coetzee, for "Life and Times of Michael K," a spare, drab, realistic novel about race relations. Rushdie and his supporters were dismayed, and there were stories of spilled wine and angry words at the ceremony. There may have been some kind of scuffle. This Booker night of "Shame" has now passed into legend, by means of a Rushdiesque process of telling and retelling. Nobody seems to know for sure what happened. Whatever it was, Rushdie was perceived to be uncool, undignified, un-British.

THAT same year, the Rushdies moved. Their new home was unequivocally splendid: a massive five-story house in Highbury Hill, one of Islington's smartest areas. Clarissa had given up her job, and set about refurbishing their "super" house. Rushdie was now in demand worldwide, for festivals, conferences, symposiums. Clarissa envisaged a new life for herself, as Salman's consort:

> My grandmother was still alive, my mother was around, we weren't frantic for money, so I thought it was better to be not working, to be daughterly or granddaughterly or wifely, and go on trips with Salman. And I liked that very much—although of course I didn't go on any trips.

In 1984, Rushdie attended the Adelaide Festival's Writers Week, in South Australia, and afterward toured the outback with Bruce Chatwin, who was gathering material for his book "The

Songlines.” Rushdie seems to have found himself out-Rushdied by the garrulous Chatwin: “In Bruce’s company, I don’t manage more than a few interruptions.”

HI, HONEY, I'M HOME!
The artist wakes refreshed, creative juices flowing.
ZIEGLER

Rushdie left his friend in Alice Springs and headed off to Sydney, equipped with a few contacts. One was Robyn Davidson, the author of “Tracks,” an account of a seventeen-hundred-mile camel ride across Australia. Rushdie describes his first meeting with Davidson as “a thunderbolt . . . love at first sight.” And Davidson seems to have felt much the same. In her novel “Ancestors,” the heroine describes her first encounter with Zac Appelfeld, a theoretical physicist from New York:

> We talked until our bones ached with cramp and cold, peeling away layers of conversation, becoming more and more personal, laughing helplessly at each other’s jokes like children, both of us opening up with excitement. We marvelled at our uncanny ability to finish each other’s sentences. There was something disquieting about it, this entangling of thoughts, as if we had a previous knowledge of each other.

On his return to England, Rushdie told Clarissa that he had met someone he “liked as much as me”:

> I didn’t understand what he meant. I just said, “That’s nice. I look forward to meeting her.” Something like that, something really stupid. It eventually became clear what he meant. Then he went back to Australia and saw her again, and it didn’t work out. But he couldn’t bear being away from her. So I said, “Go for six months and then we’ll decide what happens.” But then he was back. Never wanted to split up with me again. Make a go of it—blah, blah, blah: you know, all this stuff that one gets. Then, lo and behold, after another three months he’d gone again: finally. It was eighteen months between him coming back from Australia the first time and us actually splitting up. It was miserable, moving. It was just a nightmare.

Rushdie says that his marriage to Clarissa had “gone flat” eighteen months before he met Davidson, and that before that he had never considered himself “available” for love affairs. Clarissa’s sense of how it was is rather different:

> It is very difficult when one person achieves greatness, has all the fame, because you’re suddenly not an equal partnership any longer. And I was desperate to have another baby, but I just kept miscarrying and stuff. So I was going through my own personal bad time and I suspect that if I’d had the baby it would have been more equal somehow. I didn’t feel quite included in it all. People used to say, “Gosh, is it all right?” and I’d say “Yes, it’s fine” but I wasn’t always happy. But I did always feel that it was strong underneath. I didn’t think that bond would break.

The Highbury Hill house was sold in 1985. Clarissa bought a new house for herself and Zafar. When Robyn Davidson agreed to live in England for a time, she moved into Rushdie’s new house, in St. Peter’s Street, also in Islington. It was a provisional arrangement. As if to underscore the point, Davidson brought along her camel saddle.

RUSHDIE’S two-year relationship with Davidson has been described as “nuclear.” “Volcanic” is Liz Calder’s word for it:

> It was always exploding and subsiding. I felt very torn. I was very close to each of them, separately, before they met, and I published both of them. And of course I was given an earful from one side and an earful from the other one. I knew it would come to no good. It was not exactly a mismatch. It was an exciting combination: the chemistry was potent. But I think one of the problems was that Robyn was a writer and he was a famous writer. She did not enjoy being constantly in his shadow.

Pauline Melville, a Highbury Hill neighbor of the Rushdies and a close friend of Salman’s, also believes that Davidson’s literary ambitions may have been a problem. She recalls:

> They had one of these rows, which were quite frequent. He would mainly come to me and she would go to Sameen. One time, she said, apparently, “I don’t know what it is, but we have one of those rows and he can go straight upstairs and I can hear the typewriter. He just goes on writing. I’m wandering around in a state, unable to do anything.”

In “Ancestors,” the moody and possessive Zac often disappears into his study, a “holy shrine” from which Lucy, the book’s heroine and now Zac’s wife, is barred. In fact, the “Ancestors” portrayal is not at all vindictive. Nor is Rushdie’s of Robyn Davidson in “The Satanic Verses.” (The mountaineer Alleluia Cone seems to be based on her.) Each of these fictional accounts of the affair—if such they are—is essentially self-blaming.

RUSHDIE’S leftism of the sixties was steadily resurfacing as his fame grew. Asked to speak out, he spoke out, and he was often to be found in the company of London’s so-called “champagne socialists”—anti-Thatcherites like Margaret Drabble and anti-Americans like Harold Pinter. Rushdie was invited to Nicaragua, and he went there in July of 1986 for three weeks. A guest of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers, *el escritor hindú* felt a natural sympathy for the Sandinista cause but had no wish to be branded as its tool. Even so, he went, and was colorfully entertained by members of Ortega's famous Cabinet of poets. People who ran countries were not *meant* to be like this. "For the first time in my life, I realized with surprise, I had come across a government I could support."

Just before Rushdie's arrival, the government had shut down an opposition paper, *La Prensa*, on the ground that it was financed by the C.I.A. Rushdie warned his Sandinista friends, "Censorship is very seductive. . . . I don't like it. Not because of what you are but because of what, if this goes on, you might eventually become." By his standards, this was a muted, kindly protest, more in sorrow than in anger. On being asked later to compare Nicaragua's state of emergency with Mrs. Gandhi's clampdown in the seventies, he said that the two situations resembled each other "very slightly." In India, there had been no outside threat, no American aggressor: "I can see why [the Sandinistas] have a state of emergency. The problem is when to lift it." Rushdie did his best to see Nicaragua with his own eyes, and in the end he came out solidly in favor of his hosts. He wanted this government to work:

> It was a disorienting realization. I had spent my entire life as a writer in opposition, and had indeed conceived the writer's role as including the function of antagonist to the state. I felt distinctly peculiar about being on the same side as the people in charge, but I couldn't avoid the truth: if I had been a Nicaraguan writer, I would have felt obliged to get behind the Frente Sandinista, and push.

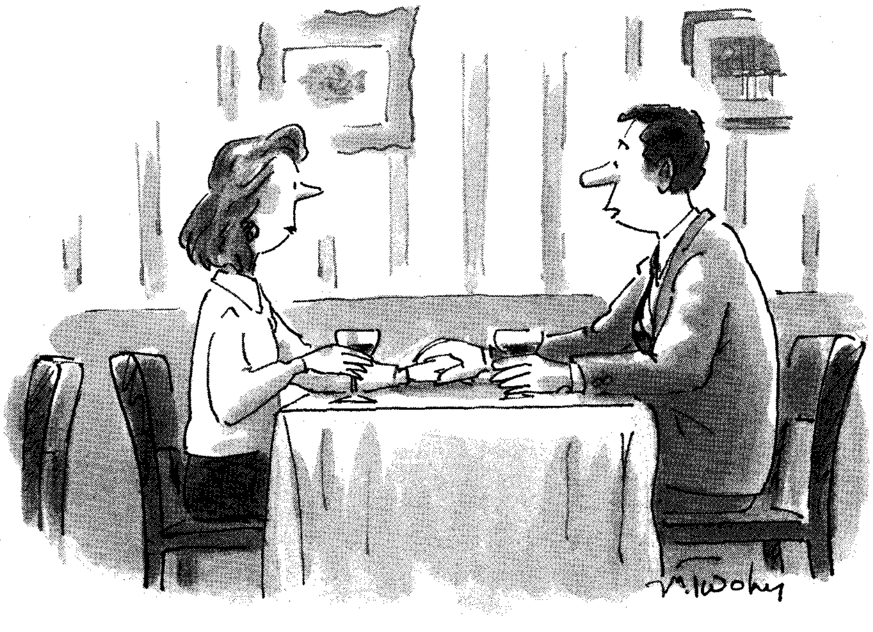
PRIOR to setting off for Central America, Rushdie had begun writing "The Satanic Verses," and he was reluctant to break off from it. But, he said later, "when I came back I found that I had become a Nicaragua bore. I couldn't stop talking about what I had experienced. I wrote 'The Jaguar Smile' as a way to shut up."

"The Jaguar Smile" appeared in January of 1987—a short book full of arresting on-location yarns, more travelogue than tract. The reviews tended to be divided along party lines. The left usually took the book's politics for granted and praised Rushdie for providing a new, "vivid" slant. The right mocked him for his naïveté, calling the book "fawning," "mesmerised," and superficial. *The New Republic* derided it as a "snap book": in snap books, "war and revolution serve primarily as backdrops against which star writers can shine." Rushdie liked to call himself a political animal and was no stranger to political controversy, but he must have been disappointed by the reception of "The Jaguar Smile," which was treated mainly as straight reportage. The novelist's transforming powers, his truthful lies had no function in this cause-serving genre. "The Jaguar Smile" is dedicated to "Robbie." Rushdie recalls that when he told Davidson this she said, "You mean your new novel *won't* be dedicated to me?" Such is the cryptology of literary romance.

But Davidson was right. Shortly afterward, she flew back to Australia—this time, for good. At a Thanksgiving dinner in 1986, Rushdie had met another strong-willed writer, an American, Marianne Wiggins, who was the author of several works of fiction. Rushdie had recently read and liked one of her short stories, "Herself in Love." Wiggins later told a reporter, "At the end of dinner, he said I should call him up." Again, it was Salman's "brilliance" and "wit" that did the damage: "He is a really funny man. . . . The brain is clearly the central erogenous zone for me, and he's got a big one." She moved into Rushdie's house in St. Peter's Street early in 1987.

Marianne Wiggins, like Robyn Davidson, found it difficult to live with Rushdie's fame, or so some friends of his now say. Some friends say that Rushdie is simply difficult to live with. Others believe that Wiggins used Rushdie to advance her own career. The novelist William Styron had known Wiggins "quite well" on Martha's Vineyard in the mid-nineteen-eighties and was struck by her determination to "get ahead in the literary world." He felt that she wished to "cultivate" him but that, "being married, I could not offer her sustenance." He added, "When I heard that she had taken up with Salman, I gave an inward groan. She was very attractive, very seductive, but I felt that she was really trouble." Like the relationship with Davidson, Rushdie's relationship with Wiggins was turbulent, but among Rushdie's friends Davidson's explosions get a better press than Wiggins's "manipulations." Davidson is spoken of as a "free spirit" who could not be tamed. Stories about Wiggins now tend to portray her as a schemer. It is possible that she is the model for Uma, in Rushdie's latest book, "The Moor's Last Sigh," who, like Wiggins, seems to come "out of nowhere," and who "would invent long, elaborate personal histories of great vividness, and would cling to them obstinately, even when confronted with internal contradictions in her rigmaroles."

By all accounts, Wiggins's long, elaborate personal stories were similarly stylish. And Rushdie was swiftly taken in: the two were married in January of 1988. Why did he do it? A clue is perhaps offered in "The Moor's Last Sigh": "How much longer did I have? Ten years? Fifteen? Twenty? Could I face my strange,



"I lied in my ad. I hate Wallace Stevens."

dark fate alone, without a lover by my side? What mattered more: love or truth?"

THE previous summer, Rushdie had spent several weeks in India, compiling a film essay for Britain's Channel Four. This, it turned out, gave him his last look at the places of his childhood before the *fatwa* put them out of reach.

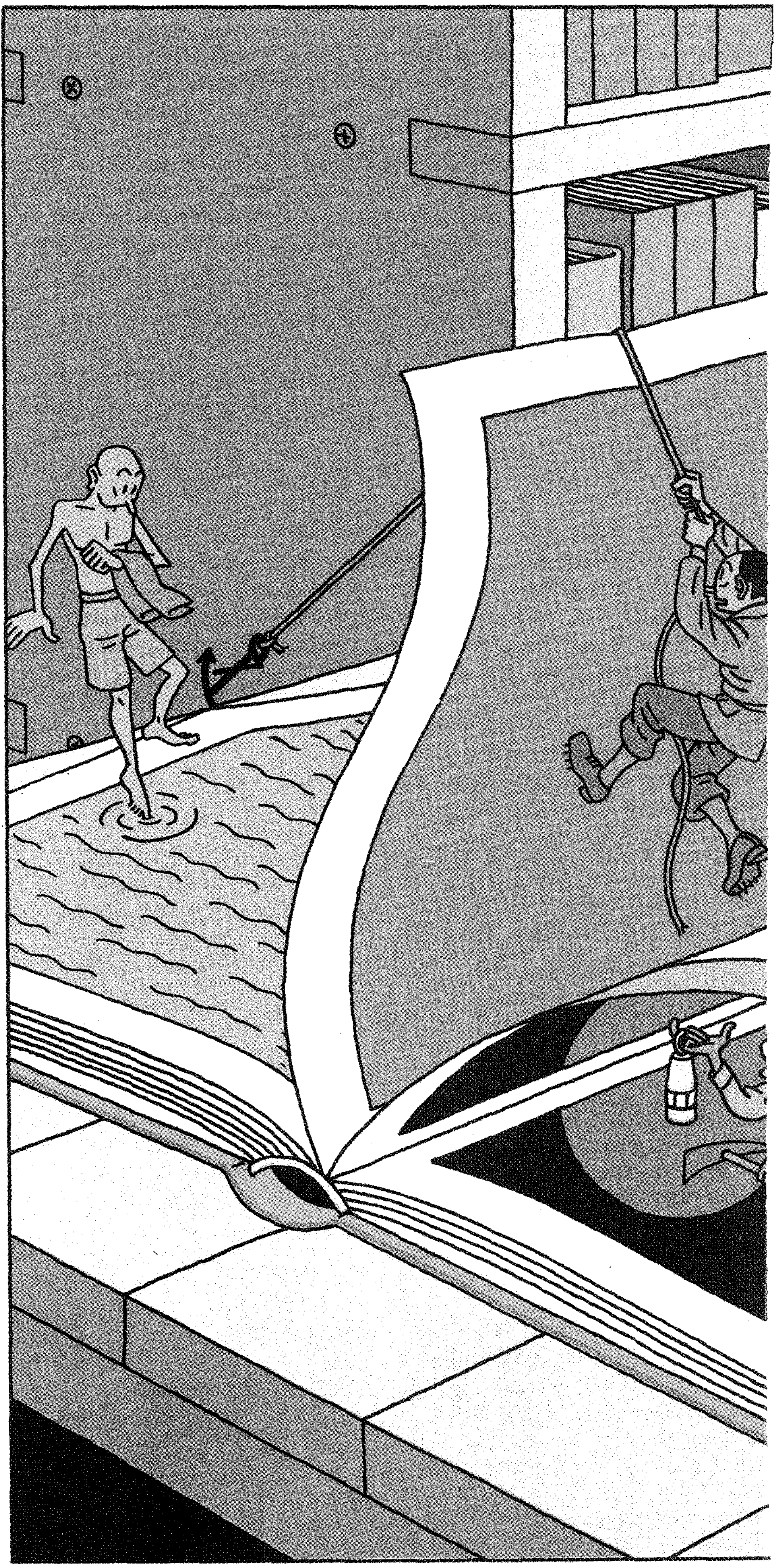
The film was called "The Riddle of Midnight," and it set out to look at India through the eyes of Rushdie's own, forty-year-old generation—"the real-life counterparts of the imaginary beings I once made up. Midnight's real children." These were people who, like Rushdie himself, had been born the year that India was born. The question he pondered was "Does India exist?" His trip coincided with an upsurge of Hindu-Muslim clashes following the occupation of the disputed Babri Masjid, a mosque in Ayodhya. The country was being torn apart by "the politics of religious hatred." Rushdie's dream India, "based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity," now seemed profoundly fanciful, quixotic.

The film was finished in the fall of 1987, and Rushdie dedicated it to his father. During the editing, back in London, news reached him that his father was ill and close to death. In "The Satanic Verses," Salahuddin is summoned to the deathbed of his father. The two are reconciled. "I came because I didn't want there to be trouble between us any more," the son says. Changez replies, "That doesn't matter any more. It's forgotten, whatever it was." And the son reflects:

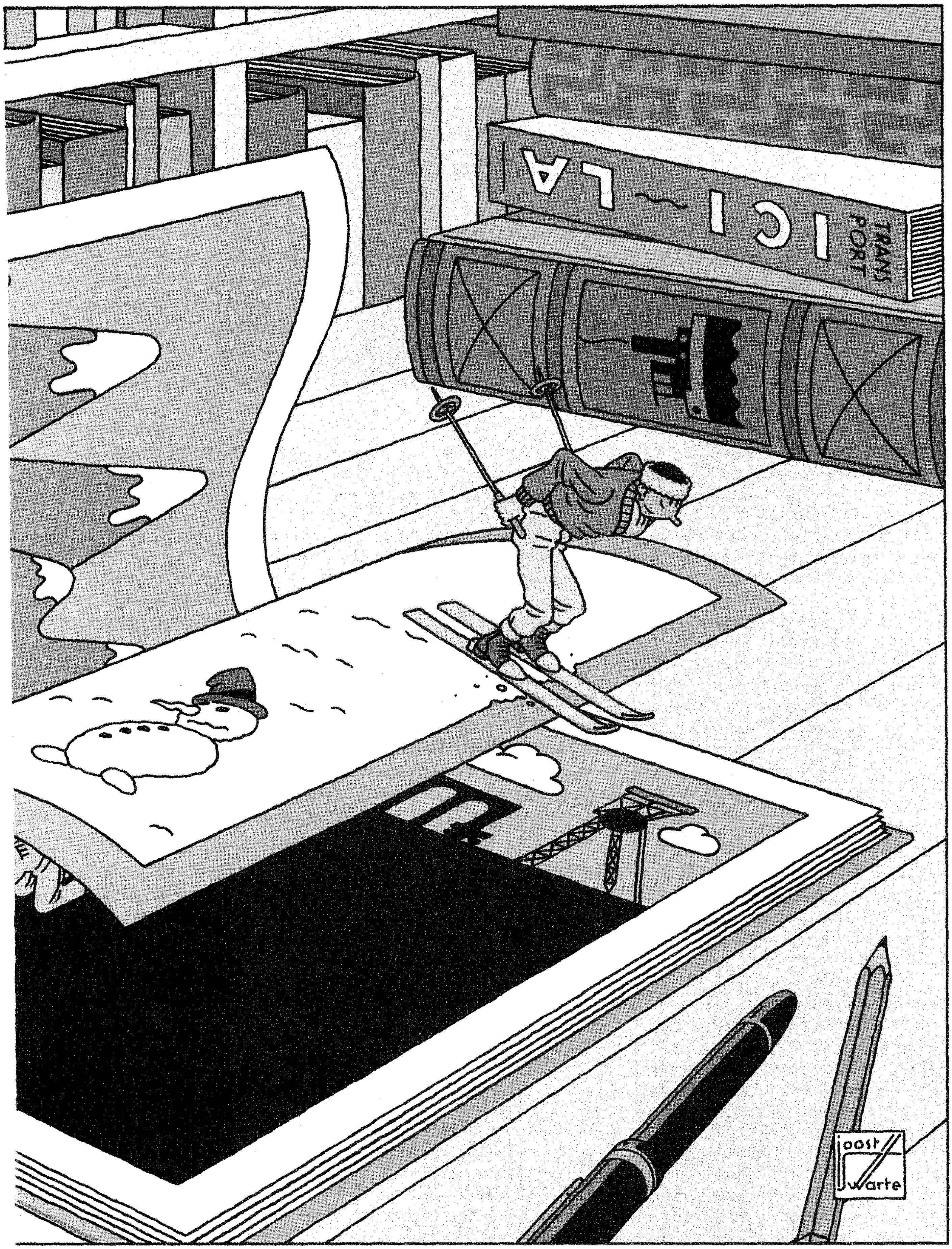
> To fall in love with one's father after the long angry decades was a serene and beautiful feeling; a renewing, life-giving thing, Saladin wanted to say, but did not, because it sounded vampirish; as if by sucking this new life out of his father he was making room, in Changez's body, for death. . . Cancer had stripped Changez Chamchawala literally to the bone; his cheeks had collapsed into the hollows of the skull, and he had to place a foam-rubber pillow under his buttocks because of the atrophying of his flesh. But it had also stripped him of his faults, of all that had been domineering, tyrannical and cruel in him, so that the mischievous, loving and brilliant man beneath lay exposed, once again, for all to see. *If only he could have been this person all his life*, Saladin . . . found himself wishing. How hard it was to find one's father just when one had no choice but to say goodbye.

The son says goodbye in Urdu.

Rushdie, in a 1988 interview, acknowledged that "like the character in the book, my father and I did in fact work it



MIND TRAVEL • BY JOOST SWARTE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out, in the end," and he went on to talk about his own changed attitude toward India, as if the one were connected to the other:

> I am no longer Indian in the way that I would have been if I hadn't left. I'm another thing. For a long time I would try and tell myself that that wasn't so, and that somehow *that* was still home, and *this* [England] was still away. When I went back there I was going home. It's true that even now I feel "at home" in Bombay, in particular, in a way I don't feel anywhere else in the world, really. But I came to feel that I had to stop telling myself that: that there was a sense in which it had become a fiction that was no longer useful to me: it was a way of not looking at the real things about my life, which were that *that* isn't home, that *that* is away. *This* is home. In a way, you can't go home again.

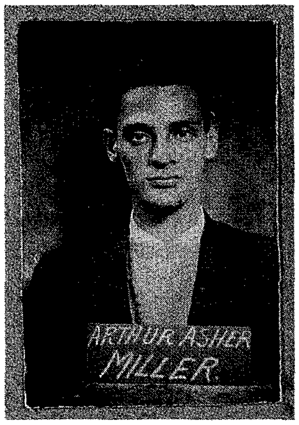
Rushdie's film had a similarly elegiac tone. When "Midnight's Children" was first published, "the most common Indian criticism of it was that it was too pessimistic about the future." Six years later, the book's conclusion seemed "absurdly, romantically optimistic." Rushdie was now an exasperated exile. A father's death, a homeland that no longer felt like home: these were life-altering upheavals. And Rushdie had turned forty.

IN 1987, he seems to have been in the mood for severings, fresh starts. On June 19th, there was a birthday lunch for him at Bruce Chatwin's house in Oxfordshire. One guest was the New York literary agent Andrew Wylie. For some time, Wylie had been courting Rushdie, but Rushdie was committed elsewhere. His British agent, Deborah Rogers, was a friend. So, too, was his British publisher, Liz Calder, his discoverer and longtime ally. The year before, Calder had left Cape in order to help found a new publishing house, Bloomsbury, and Rushdie had promised to move with her. "The Satanic Verses" would be Bloomsbury's big title for the coming year.

Evidently, Calder had made an offer for the book: fifty thousand pounds for the British hardcover rights. On June 18th, an elated Rushdie conveyed the news to Wylie. Wylie's response, it has been said, was to advise Rushdie to reject the offer: "You mustn't do it." The following day, everyone—Rushdie, Calder, Rogers, and Wylie—gathered at Chatwin's house, and feelings ran high. Rushdie's next move was to fire Deborah Rogers, break with Calder, and sign up with Wylie. It was, says Calder, "the most blatant and

ANNALS OF LITERATURE

BIRTH OF A SALESMAN



Miller's 1937 college-yearbook picture.

Arthur Miller turned eighty on October 17, 1995, and not quietly. In England, the Royal National Theatre was performing his latest play, "Broken Glass," in repertory; in America, Nicholas Hytner was starting the film version of "The Crucible"; and Miller's collection "Homely Girl, A Life: And Other Stories" was published. In searching the Arthur Miller Archive in the Harry Ransom library at the University of Texas for a suitable way for The New Yorker to honor one of America's greatest—and certainly most productive—playwrights, I came across this short story, written when Miller was about seventeen, which foreshadows his masterpiece, "Death of a Salesman." The manuscript—an anecdote, entitled "In Memoriam," about a salesman Miller met while working in his father's coat business—was found stashed in a box by his mother, Augusta, soon after "Death of a Salesman" opened in New York at the Morosco Theatre, in 1949. Miller himself had forgotten about the story. A note attached to the manuscript reads, "The real Schoenzeit of the story threw himself in front of an El train the day following the incident."

Miller's father, Isidore, not Schoenzeit, was his first experience of a salesman. Izzy had come to America from Poland at the age of six with a ticket sewn into his trousers and a sign around his neck saying "Please put this boy on the S.S. Clearwater." According to Miller, Izzy grew up "totally illiterate" but learned "just enough English to read the newspaper. He couldn't read Yiddish either." He, too, worked for his father, a very successful coat manufacturer (he had preceded the boy to America), who sent the strapping young man around the country selling coats to the "non-Jewish population." "My father looked like an Irishman," Miller said. "He was six feet three inches tall, he had blue eyes and red hair and a square head." The Depression hit when Miller was a teen-ager and old enough to see exhaustion replace exhilaration as the experience of American life. "I've always thought of the formation of my approach to writing as springing directly out of the economic crisis of the thirties," he said in an interview. The shock of the Depression, and of the collapse of his father's power just at the moment in adolescence when Miller was trying to make an identity from his father's example, had a traumatic effect. "It struck me often that this wound possibly is expressed through a quest for order, which literature is," Miller said.

Miller graduated from high school in 1932, but he couldn't immediately go to college because, as he said, "nobody was in possession of the fare." After three years, Miller saved enough money to attend the University of Michigan. He studied economics and history, and although he soon gave up these disciplines to pursue his writing, he brought their social perspectives to the stories he told America about the spiritual atrophy that was the price the nation paid for its impossible dreams of innocence and success. As Miller said of the charge that Willy Loman had no values, "He does have values. The fact that they can't be realized is what is driving him mad."

—JOHN LAHR

IN MEMORIAM

SITTING here now, thinking of him, he seems to be a romantic figure, but really he wasn't. Yet I couldn't venture to call him "commonplace." I never knew him intimately, yet I feel as though I knew him more closely, more thoroughly, than I know myself.

His was a salesman's profession, if one may describe such dignified slavery as a profession, and though he tried to interest himself in his work he never became entirely molded into the pot of that business. His emotions were displayed at the wrong times always, and he never quite knew when to laugh. Perhaps, if I may say so, he never was complete. He had lost something vital. There was an air of quiet solitude, of cryptic wondering about both him and his name.

Although he was ever simply and immaculately dressed, I always imagined he had been dressed by someone else.

When I first heard his name, I wondered if he hadn't forgotten some other and had merely been called this by men. His last name was Schoenzeit; the first I never learned, but it had to be Alfred. He always seemed to need that name. Especially when he sat at the small glass-topped table in my father's showroom, slowly perusing the columns of the *Times*, with tears of perspiration dotting the reddened ridge that his gray felt hat had made around his head. The shined, bulgy-toed shoes placed flatly and it seemed carefully on the carpet, his overcoat folded neatly on a chair, the bow of his tie stuck so perfectly into the crevice of a starched, rounded collar completed a setting where I am sure he never belonged.

Schoenzeit, as everyone called him, often was gay. I might add "happy," but of the last I shall never be sure. He laughed as superciliously as any of the others when someone was the object of a quip. But these occasions were rare and never lasted, as far as he was concerned. Always he returned to his fogged manner, and after the joke had faded from his mind the light which seemed to brighten his countenance, too, disappeared, and he was once more enigmatic and incomprehensible.

I had, on several occasions, been alone with him, and may truthfully say I deeply pitied such a dejected soul. At one time it was necessary for him to go to the Bronx to interview a large retail drygoods store, and I was instructed to carry his samples. It was late spring, the sky was cloudless and blue, a yellow sun was slowly warming the cool morning air, and the usual city hurriers were plying their trade.

I had six coats in my arms, holding them against my chest, while he walked, leaning very slightly forward, by my side. His feet must have hurt him, for he pointed them outward, laying them flat on the ground at every step. When walking, he seemed to be striving against a stiff wind, his eyebrows peaked together, forming tiny creases at the bridge of his nose. His hat, placed straight on his head, shaded his eyes, which gazed seekingly ahead.

It was necessary to walk from Eighth to Third Avenue in order to reach the Elevated, and he offered many times to rest. I must have looked tired, because he turned to me once and laughed, saying in his cracked yet resonant baritone, "Hard work, eh, kid? Some business . . ." Of course, I didn't admit my weariness, and pitching my head to one side, raising my eyebrows and smiling, assured him that I was enjoying it as much as he was.

In due time, we approached the El, and about a block away he slowly and lightly touched my arm and, still looking ahead, he asked, "Arthur, do you get paid from the firm for carfare?" He said this in a low tone, as though he were trying to hide his point until it was absolutely necessary to take the plunge.

I thought for a moment and answered, "Well, whenever I have to go anywhere out of walking distance I am given money to ride, but I have no standing allowance for such purposes." He seemed to falter, and flushed a trifle before answering, and for a second I felt both rage and pity for this decrepit soul, who, it seemed, aged many years as he turned to me. I knew then that he felt as though his life were ended, that he was merely being pushed by outside forces. And though his body went on as before, the soul inside had crumpled and broken beyond repair.

He was asking me now for carfare. I knew he would rather have been pulled apart by a tiger, but he was asking me for carfare, a nickel to hold out to a corpulent, uninterested machine for his fare. My heart bled for him at that moment, and as we mounted the long stairway to the trains I realized that as low and shakingly embarrassed as I felt, his senses were that much more tormented and destroyed. And I marvelled at his poise under the circumstances. The coats were warm now against me, and I was thankful to God himself for this refuge for my gawky body which, with the expression of my eyes, must reveal to him my sensations.

I tried as best I could to make this situation seem as if it were commonplace—I who had carried samples for so many salesmen. And when we reached the turnstile, I balanced my burden on one knee while I dipped my free hand into my pocket. Behind my throat, I cursed myself for not having the change. I turned from him in order to get the nickels required, and when I lifted my eyes to his figure I prayed, until my temples seemed to burst, for his salvation. At that moment, he looked so broken, so dejected and lost that I hastily lowered my gaze. He appeared to me then, as he stood there at the turnstile, like a small dog who has messed in the house, standing now, after his beating, waiting for his master to open the door to the back yard.

During the entire ride uptown, we two spoke but sparingly. The bright streets below changed constantly as we racketed past, and the windows of the houses facing the trains offered a haven for my confused and weary imagination.

He sold nothing that day and was profusely maltreated by the attending force at the buying office who, by virtue of their superior intelligence and ties to match, were vindicated even when they were consciously adding to the vicissitudes of a seller's life.

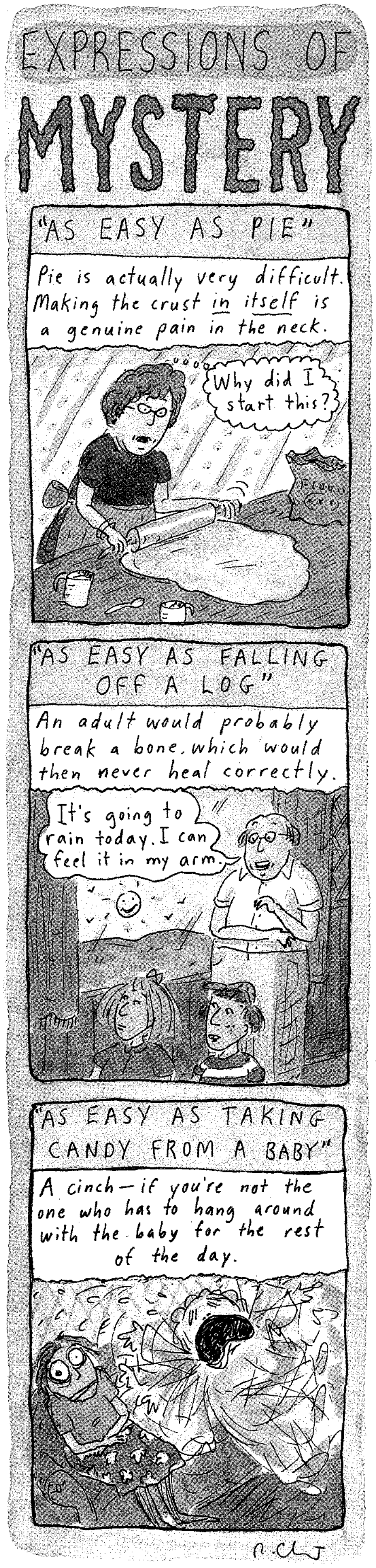
On the return trip, Alfred, as I subconsciously called him, became more voluble and questioned me as to my ambitions and my occupations in my leisure time. Upon hearing that I owned an old car, he immediately became interested and spoke a little less haltingly than was his wont. From constant rebuff, he was loath to venture an opinion, and often embarrassed us both by ending a bountiful conversation unexpectedly.

He accompanied me to my father's place and, placing his hand on the small of my back, patted me lightly, and said with a faint smile, "Thanks, Arthur—and I'll . . . see you tomorrow."

With that farewell, he was off into the crowd, and his restless body faded slowly into the dark overcoats of unknowns as it willingly shrank from my sight.

I never saw him again and had forgotten him entirely when I heard of his death.

"Schoenzeit is dead," and my only recollection of that second when I heard those words is a slow exhaling of my breath and a cool, soft, glowing smile within my soul. —ARTHUR MILLER


EXPRESSIONS OF MYSTERY
"AS EASY AS PIE"
Pie is actually very difficult. Making the crust in itself is a genuine pain in the neck.
Why did I start this?
FLOUR
"AS EASY AS FALLING OFF A LOG"
An adult would probably break a bone, which would then never heal correctly.
It's going to rain today. I can feel it in my arm.
"AS EASY AS TAKING CANDY FROM A BABY"
A cinch—if you're not the one who has to hang around with the baby for the rest of the day.

unfeeling piece of daylight robbery I've ever seen." She sent Rushdie an angry letter, which she now somewhat regrets; it was, she says, "too angry." He did not respond. Rushdie's new agents, meanwhile, set to work and sold the novel abroad first—to a German and an Italian publisher—to establish the book's value in the marketplace. Only then was it offered to English-language publishers. It was bought by Viking Penguin for eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and, while the deal entitled the firm to publish the book in both Britain and the United States, it was still a staggering sum for a literary novel.

"The Satanic Verses" was published on September 26, 1988. Prepublication comment in London suggested that the British were quite ready to concede that large parts of this long novel were not meant for them. Mark Lawson wrote, in the *Independent Magazine*, "There must be a question about the ability of even the willing Western reader to migrate mentally to the book's space." He wished that Rushdie had provided a "course of running instruction" for his non-Islamic readers.

When the reviews appeared, they were, on the whole, a touch bemused. There were grumbles about Rushdie's lack of structural control. In the *TLS* Robert Irwin wrote of an "alarming increase" in Rushdie's "inventive powers," and in *The New York Review of Books* D. J. Enright called "The Satanic Verses" "a thousand and one nights crammed into a week of evenings. . . . A book that nobody else in Britain (at least) would have wanted to write, or could have written."

This notion that in "The Satanic Verses" Rushdie's true audience was elsewhere meant that few Western critics picked up on the book's "offensive" elements: calling the Prophet Mahound (a name used by medieval Christian theologians); suggesting that the Koran was not the direct word of God, that a scribe might have been "changing verses"; the naming of whores in a Mecca brothel after the Prophet's wives. Not much notice was taken either of jokes about camels that spoke in the voice of the Prophet or of Rushdie's numerous Art-versus-God asides. Nowadays, some of the book's passages leap from the page with irony:

> "A poet's work . . . To name the unnamable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it from going to sleep." And if rivers of blood flow from the cuts his verses inflict, then they will nourish him.

The furor began in India. In September, a Muslim M.P., Syed Shahabuddin, protested that "The Satanic Verses" was "an indecent vilification of the Holy Prophet" and that "no civilized society should permit it." On October 5th, the book was banned. Rushdie wrote an open letter to Prime Minster Rajiv Gandhi, accusing him of kowtowing to Muslim extremists, and explaining that the so-called offensive passages of the novel were the dream of a fictional narrator—"an Indian movie star, and one who is losing his mind, at that. How much further from history could one get?" To this the Muslim M.P. responded, "You are aggrieved that some of us have condemned you without a hearing and asked for a ban without reading your book. Yes, I have not read it, nor do I intend to. I do not have to wade through a filthy drain to know what filth is."

When news of an impending Indian ban reached Britain, photocopies of the book's "offending passages" were sent to Islamic organizations, and to the London embassies of the Islamic nations. On October 8th, a London-based Saudi newspaper denounced Rushdie, and soon after a Muslim magazine published provocative selections from the book. There was no immediate outcry, although Viking Penguin received letters of protest and, in the New York offices, a few bomb scares and death threats. Such rumblings went on until December, and then there was a burning of the book in Bolton, Lancashire, attended by a large gathering of Muslims, but it was not much reported in the press.

It was not until January, 1989, that the British Muslims' campaign began to hit the headlines. A book-burning in Bradford, Yorkshire, was covered by national TV, and two weeks later eight thousand Muslims marched in London. Rushdie tried to reason with his foes: his novel was not "anti-religious"; it was an attempt "to write about migration, its stresses and transformations"—a subject that his Bradford critics, his fellow-immigrants, should know something about. But it was too late for reason. In Islamabad, Pakistan, sections of "The Satanic Verses" were being read out on street corners. On February 12th, an inflamed mob stormed Islamabad's American Culture Center and was fired on by police. Five demonstrators died. The next day, there was rioting in Kashmir: one dead and more than sixty injured. Scenes from these riots were shown on Iranian TV and, according to one account, were watched by Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini summoned a secretary and dictated the *fatwa:*

> I inform all zealous Muslims of the world that the author of the book entitled "The Satanic Verses"—which has been compiled, printed and published in opposition to Islam, the Prophet, and the Qur'an—and all those involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death.
>
> I call on all zealous Muslims to execute them quickly, wherever they may be found, so that no one else will dare to insult the Muslim sanctities. God willing, whoever is killed on this path is a martyr.

As Khomeini dictated, so the story goes, Rushdie was attending a party in London to celebrate his wife's new novel, "John Dollar." Gillon Aitken, now Rushdie's British agent, was at the party, and recalls that the atmosphere was "strained":

> I remember that evening the news of the deaths in Pakistan was in the air. There was a kind of excitement that this was happening: people dying in Pakistan because of Salman's book. And this of course overshadowed Marianne's book. It was an uneasy evening; uneasy, too, because, a couple of days earlier, Salman had said that he was definitely going to extricate himself from the situation with Marianne. Things were very bad. She was badmouthing him to friends. I think he really did want to be shot of her. At the same time, he really was caught up with her. There was something very powerful there still.

The next morning, Wiggins phoned Gillon Aitken to inform him of the *fatwa*. Rushdie was in the middle of a television interview (in which he expressed the wish that he had written a "more critical" book). It had previously been agreed that, as soon as he was done, he and Wiggins would take a cab to Aitken's offices in Chelsea:

> They arrived at around 11 A.M. At 2 P.M.—each of us had the date in our diaries—there was a memorial service for Bruce Chatwin, who had died a few weeks before. The service was in the Greek church in Bayswater. We had sandwiches brought in. Salman and Marianne did not say very much. The telephone rang ceaselessly. The world's press . . . people asking, Is it true? Has he gone into hiding? I can't remember how I responded to the calls. I was picking up the receiver, speaking, putting it down. Then another call would be put through—on and on and on. They were both sitting on the other side of my desk, rapt as I was by this astonishing performance of the telephones.

Before the Chatwin memorial service, the press was gathering outside the church. Aitken shepherded the Rushdies to their pew:

> The church was packed. Paul Theroux was sitting behind us and he said something like "We'll be here for you next, Salman. Watch your back!" By the time we left the church, the press coverage had increased. Some reporters were actually inside the church. Someone from the *Telegraph* approached us and I remember saying to him, "Look, just fuck off, will you?" Salman has always treasured that. And the man from the *Telegraph* said, "Don't you talk to me like that. I went to public school, too, you know." It was very funny.

After the service, Aitken took Rushdie and Wiggins back to his offices and spent the rest of the afternoon fielding calls. Eventually, Rushdie and Wiggins were transported to Islington—not to the St. Peter's Street house but to a nearby basement flat that Wiggins kept for her writing. A friend who saw the couple just after the *fatwa* was announced described Wiggins as "excited, clinging seductively to Salman." The tabloid *Sun* later told the world that "VENGEANCE VOW SAVES ROCKY MARRIAGE." Not for long, as it turned out. Wiggins and Rushdie separated a few months after he went into hiding (provisionally at first, and then, the following year, definitively). Later, she said to the press, "He's not the bravest man in the world, but will do anything to save his life."

At Wiggins's flat, Rushdie was told to stay put. "Police officers on short patrol watched over me that night. I lay unsleeping and listened out for the angel of death." The next day, he was offered Special Branch protection and, when he accepted, was taken into hiding. He believed that the whole business would be solved in a matter of days. The police thought so:

> So off we went, not to any deep-secret safe house, but to a hotel in the countryside. In the room next door to mine was a reporter from the *Daily Mirror* who had checked in with a lady not his wife. I kept out of his way. And that night, when every journalist in the country was trying to find out where I'd gone, this gentleman—how shall I put this?—missed his scoop.

Yes, we all thought that it was going to be over in a few days. But this was almost seven years ago: for Rushdie, the start of a new life, his second life, post-*fatwa*. When I first discussed with him the idea of a biographical essay, he said that he would coöperate, provided that I did not pursue my researches beyond what was for him the final day of his first life: Valentine's Day, 1989. The story of his second life, the life he is living now, cannot be told just yet: there are too many prohibitions. And when it *is* told he will do the telling—when he is able to. In 1990, on the first anniversary of the *fatwa*, he wrote:

> I feel as if I have been plunged, like Alice, into the world beyond the looking-glass, where nonsense is the only available sense. And I wonder if I'll ever be able to climb back through the mirror.
>
> Do I feel regret? Of course I do: regret that such offence has been taken against my work when it was not intended—when dispute was intended, and dissent, and even, at times, satire, and criticism of intolerance, and the like, but not the thing of which I'm most often accused, not "filth," not "insult," not "abuse." I regret that so many people who might have taken pleasure in finding their reality given pride of place in a novel will now not read it because of what they believe it to be, or will come to it with their minds already made up.
>
> And I feel sad to be so grievously separated from my community, from India, from everyday life, from the world.
>
> Please understand, however: I make no complaint. I am a writer. I do not accept my condition. I will strive to change it; but I inhabit it, I am trying to learn from it.
>
> Our lives teach us who we are. ♦

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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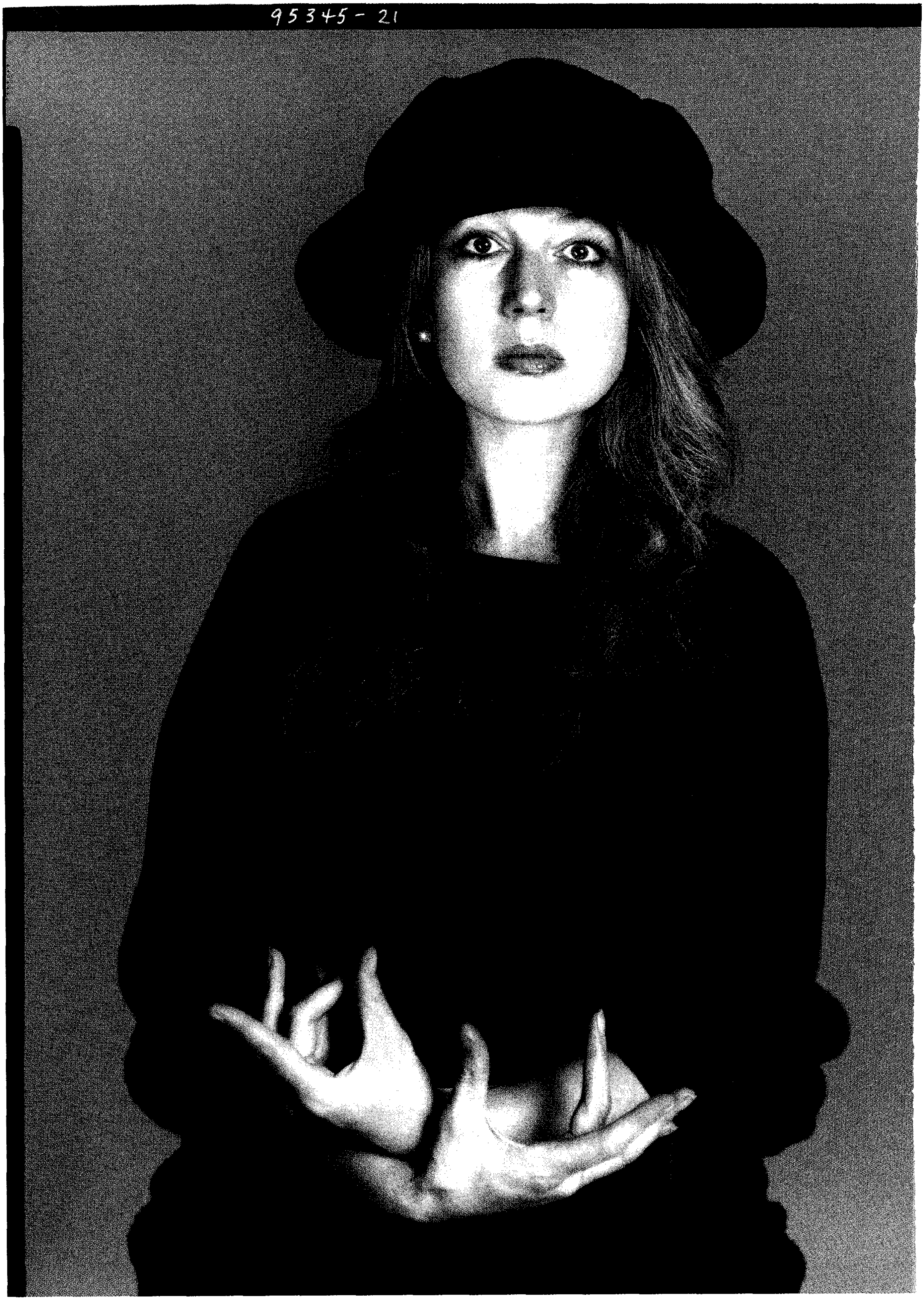

PERSONAL HISTORY

THE LIFE OF OTHERS

BY CANDIA McWILLIAM

It was high June and perhaps a hundred guests were in the Hebrides, celebrating the wedding of the son of the Laird to his Australian bride. If there is to be sun in the Hebrides, it comes in secret, as if for those who are faithful to the place, in spring and autumn. It's unusual for the sun to show off in summer. But it was, and the normally deserted bay was full of handsome, large young Australians. Baskets of food lay about, wine and beer cooled in the stream among the watercress. The cows had mooched off; three sheep had been slaughtered by the part-time butcher and lay primitive as a hecatomb on a pyre built of Cyclopic stones that the Australian boys had handled with ease, "no worries."

The beach's sand and its normally more introspective sea seemed like a travel poster intended to set visitors at their ease. The island has fewer than a hundred inhabitants but many beaches—one silver, one pink, one whose sand whistles, one where fulmars breed, one studded with cowries. Much of it looks deserted, although it is tenaciously cultivated. Early in the last century a thousand people lived here.

Today there were people swimming in relaxed fashion, not as though it were going to do them good. Healthy blondes played volleyball, watched by men who could throw a ball half the length of the beach. Some had come by boat from other islands. Rumors travel fast in the islands, and a couple of boats had sailed in just for the crack.

It was not a typical day, when we might have been fully dressed, two or three in number, sharing an apple and talking into the cold wind. The picture now was one of plenty and consumption. People lolled in the heat and extended themselves with the comforting languor of shared hangover and good will.

The air was still and full of the smell of roasting meat and smothered flames. The gaseous bitterness of bay twigs interleaved the bloodier scents and the oily, unforgettable smell of rosemary, when the air was suddenly sliced up by violent clatter.

Helicopters do come to such places, for reasons of rescue, but this was not such a day. As the helicopter circled, tipped, and landed atop a dune, we speculated about the late arrivals.

A curious guest spun off up the dune and machar toward the helicopter. We saw a man in full pilot's rig jump down and open the door for a startled-looking figure no one recognized.

The sacrifice of meat smoked away, the hungry young people moving a little apart from its focus as the heat beat out of the stones and compressed and released the air over the burning flesh. The knuckles of the sheep and their ribs were showing as the cooking flesh shrank.

There was a squawk from a cousin of the groom, who had gone to meet the returning messenger from the helicopter. She is a painter and knows her moderns. She was flustered, as though trying to tell deaf people to move along before they get run down. No one reacted much to what she said, though a few of us thought it was a good joke played to the wrong house.

"It's Anselm Kiefer," she said. "It's Anselm Kiefer. You know."

It had been Anselm Kiefer, the German artist whose art is haunted by the Holocaust, but he had not stayed for a second look. He was wearily in search of deserted places, and had chartered a helicopter to show him this one, which had come highly recommended. Perhaps desolation is a decadent requirement. At any rate, fate did not offer it to Anselm Kiefer when he stumbled from the sky upon a classical idyll with indifferent youth cavorting round a pyre of burning meat. ♦

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Candia McWilliam, London, December 1, 1995.

FICTION

BEAUTIFUL GRADE

BY LORRIE MOORE

IT'S a chilly night, bitter inside and out. After a grisly, monthlong court proceeding, Max's good friend Albert has become single again. And characteristically curatorial: Albert has invited his friends over to his sublet to celebrate New Year's Eve and watch his nuptial and postnuptial videos, which Albert has hauled down from the bookcase and proffered with ironic wonder and glee. At each of his three weddings, Albert's elderly mother had videotaped the ceremony, and at the crucial moment in the vows, each time, Albert's face turns impishly from his bride, looks straight into his mother's camera, and says, "I do. I swear I do." The divorce proceedings, by contrast, are mute, herky-jerky, and badly lit ("A clerk," says Albert): there are wan smiles, business suits, the waving of a pen.

At the end of the last video, Albert's guests clap. Max puts his fingers in his mouth and whistles shrilly. (Not every man can do this. Max himself didn't learn until college, though that was now thirty years ago: three decades of ear-piercing whistling—youth shall not be wasted on the young.) Albert nods, snaps the tapes back into their plastic cases, turns on the lights, and sighs.

"No more weddings," Albert announces. "No more divorces. No more wasting time. From here on in, I'm just going to go out there, find a woman I really don't like very much, and give her a house."

Max, divorced only once, is here tonight with Debbie, a woman who is too young for him: at least that is what he knows is said, though the next time it is said to his face Max will shout, "I beg your pardon!" Maybe not shout. Maybe squeak. Squeak with a dash of begging. Then he'll just hurl himself to the ground and plead for a quick stoning. For now, this second, however, he will pretend to a braver, more evolved heart, explaining to anyone who might ask how much easier it would be to venture out still with his ex-wife, someone his own age, but no, not Max, not big, brave Max: Max has entered something complex, spiritually biracial, politically tricky, and, truth be told, physically demanding. Youth shall not be wasted on the young.

Who the hell is that?

She looks fourteen!

You can't be serious!

Max has had to drink more than usual. He has had to admit to himself that on his own, without any wine, he doesn't have a shred of the courage necessary for this romance. ("Not to pry, Max, or ply you with feminist considerations, but, excuse me—you're dating a twenty-five-year-old?" "Twenty-four," he says. "But you were close!")

His women friends have yelled at him—or sort of yelled. It's really been more of a cross between sighing and giggling. "Don't be cruel," Max has had to say.

Albert has been kinder, more delicate, in tone if not in substance. "*Some* people might consider your involvement with this girl a misuse of your charm," he said slowly.

"But I've worked hard for this charm," said Max. "Believe me, I started from scratch. Can't I do with it what I want?"

Albert sized up Max's weight loss and slight tan, the sprinkle of freckles like berry seeds across Max's arms, the summer whites worn way past Labor Day in the law school's cavernous, crowded lecture halls, and he said, "Well, then, *some* people might think it a mishandling of your position." He paused, put his arm around Max. "But hey: I think it has made you look very—tennisy."

Max shoved his hands in his pockets. "You mean the whole kindness-of-strangers thing?"

Albert took his arm back. "What are you talking about?" he asked, and then his face fell in a kind of melting, concerned way. "Oh, you poor thing," he said. "You poor, poor thing."

Max has protested, obfuscated, gone into hiding. But he is too tired to keep Debbie in the closet anymore. The body has only so many weeks of stagefright in it before it simply gives up and just goes out onstage. Moreover, this semester Debbie is no longer taking either of his constitutional-law classes. She is no longer, between weekly lectures, at home in his bed, with a rented movie, saying things that are supposed to make him laugh, things like "Open up, doll. Is that drool?" and "Don't you dare think I'm doing this for a good grade. I'm doing this for a *beautiful* grade." Debbie no longer performs her remarks at him, which he misses a little, all that effort and desire. "If I'm just a passing fancy, then I want to pass fancy," she once said. Also, "Law school—it's the film school of the nineties."

Debbie is no longer a student of his in any way, so at last their appearance together is only unattractive and self-conscious-making, not illegal. Max can show up with her for dinner. He can live in the present, his newly favorite tense.

But he must remember who is here at this party, people for whom history, acquired knowledge, the accumulation of days and years are everything—or is this simply the convenient shorthand of his own paranoia? There is Albert, with his videos; Albert's old friend Brigitte, a Berlin-born political scientist; Stanley Pampf, off every other semester to fly to Japan and study the zoological effects of radiation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Stanley's wife, Roberta, a travel agent and obsessive tabulator of Stanley's frequent-flier miles (Max has often admired her posters: "Step back in time, come to Argentina" says the one on her door); Lina, a pretty, visiting Serb teaching in the Slavic Studies department; and Lina's doctor husband Jack, a Texan who five years ago, in Yugoslavia, put Dallas dirt under the laboring Lina's hospital bed so that his son could be "born on Texan soil." ("But the boy is a total *Sairb*," Lina says of her son, rolling her lovely "r"s. "Just don't tell Jack.")

Lina.

Lina, Lina.

Max is a little taken with Lina.

"You are with Debbie because somewhere in your pahst ease some pretty leetle girl who went away from you," Lina said to him once on the phone.

"Or how about because everyone else I know is married."

"Ha!" she said. "You only believe they are married."

Which sounded, to Max, like the late-night, adult version of "Peter Pan"—no Mary Martin, no songs, just a lot of wishing and thinking lovely thoughts, then afterward all the participants throw themselves out the window.

And never, never land?

Marriage, Max thinks—it's the film school of the nineties.

Truth be told, Max is a little afraid of suicide. Taking one's life, he thinks, has too many glitzy things to offer: a real edge on the narrative (albeit retrospectively), a disproportionate philosophical advantage (though again, retrospectively), the last word, the final cut, the parting shot. Most important, it gets you the hell out of there, wherever it is you are, and he can see how such a thing might happen in a weak but brilliant moment, one you just might regret later, while looking down from the depthless sky or up through two sandy ant holes and some weeds.

Still, Lina is the one he finds himself thinking about, carefully dressing for in the morning—matching his socks, removing all dry-cleaning tags.

ALBERT leads them all into the dining room, and everyone drifts around the large teak table, studying the busily constructed salads at each place setting—salads that, with their knobs of cheese, jutting chives, and little folios of frisée, resemble small Easter hats.

"Do we wear these or eat them?" asks Jack. In his mouth is a piece of gray chewing gum like a rat's brain.

"I admire gay people," Max's voice booms. "To have the courage to love whom you want to love in the face of all bigotry."

"Relax," Debbie murmurs, nudging him. "It's only salad."

Albert indicates in a general way where they should sit, alternating male and female, like the names of hurricanes, though his arrangement leaves all the couples split and far apart, on New Year's Eve, no less, as Max suspects Albert wants it.

"Don't sit next to him—he bites," Max says to Lina as she takes a place next to Albert.

"Six degrees of separation," says Debbie. "Do you believe that thing about how everyone is separated by only six people?"

"Oh, *we're* separated by at least six, aren't we, darling?" Lina says to her husband.

"At least."

"No, I mean by *only* six," says Debbie. "I mean strangers." But no one is listening to her.

"This is a political New Year's Eve," says Albert. "We're here to protest the new year, protest the old; generally get a petition going to Father Time. But also eat: in China it's the Year of the Pig."

"Ah, one of those years of the Pig," says Stanley. "I love those."

Max puts salt on his salad, then looks up apologetically. "I salt everything," he says, "so it can't get away."

ALBERT brings out salmon steaks and distributes them with Brigitte's help. Ever since Albert was denied promotion to full-professor rank, his articles on Flannery O'Connor ("A Good Man Really *Is* Hard to Find," "Everything that Rises *Must Indeed* Converge," and "The Totemic South: The Violent *Actually Do* Bear It Away!") having failed to meet with collegial acclaim, he has become determined to serve others, passing out the notices and memorandums, arranging the punch and cookies at various receptions. He has not yet become very good at it, but the effort touches and endears. Now everyone sits with their hands in their laps, leaning back when plates are set before them. When Albert sits down, they begin to eat.

"You know, in Yugoslavia," says Jack, chewing, "a person goes to school for four years to become a waiter. Four years of waiter school."

"Typical Yugoslavians," adds Lina. "They

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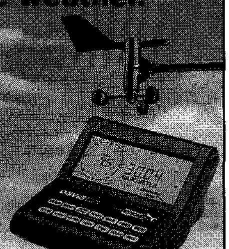

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have to go to school for four years to learn how to serve someone."

"I'll bet they do it well," Max says stupidly. Everyone ignores him, for which he is grateful. His fish smells fishier than the others'; he is sure of it. Perhaps he has been poisoned.

"Did you hear about that poor Japanese foreign student who stopped to ask directions and was shot because he was thought to be an intruder?" This is Debbie, dear Debbie. How did she land on this? Perhaps she herself, amidst all his friends, feels like a doomed and foreign student.

"Oh, God, I know. Wasn't that terrible?" says Brigitte.

"A shooting like that really makes a lot of sense, too," says Max, "when you think about how the Japanese are particularly known for their street crime." Lina chortles, and Max pokes at his fish a little.

"I guess the man thought the student was going to come in and reprogram his computer," says Jack, and everyone laughs.

"Now, is that racist?" asks Max.

"Is it?"

"Maybe."

"I don't think so."

"Not in any real way."

"It's just us."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Would anyone like more food?"

"So, Stanley," says Lina. "How is the research going?"

Is this absent querying or pointed interrogation? Max can't tell. The last time they were all together they got into a terrible discussion about the Second World War. The Second World War is not necessarily a good topic of conversation, and among the eight of them it became a total hash. Stanley yelled, Lina threatened to leave, and Brigitte broke down over dessert: "I was a little girl. I was there," Brigitte said, of Berlin.

Lina, whose three uncles, she'd once told Max, had been bayonetted by Nazis, sighed and looked off at the wallpaper—wide, pale stripes, like pajamas. It was impossible to eat.

Brigitte had looked accusingly at everyone, her face swelling like a baked apple. Tears leaked out of her eyes. "They did not have to bomb like that. Not like that. They did not have to bomb so much," and then she began to sob.

It had been a shock to Max. For years, Brigitte had been the subject of his skeptical private jokes with Albert. They would make up fake titles for her books on European history: "That Kooky Führer" and "Hitler: What A Goofball!" But that evening Brigitte's tears were so bitter and innocent and full, after so many years, that it haunted and startled him. What did it mean to cry like that—*at dinner*? He had never known a war in that way, or in any way, really. He had never even known a dinner in that way.

"Fine," says Stanley, to Lina. "Great, really. I'm going back next month. The small-head-size data is the most interesting and conclusive thus far." He chews his fish. "If I got paid by the word, I'd be a rich man." He has the supple, overconfident voice of a panelist from the "Texaco Opera Quiz."

"Jack here gets paid by the word," says Max, "and that word is 'Next?' "

Perhaps Max could adroitly switch the subject away from nuclear devastation and steer it toward national health plans. Would that be an improvement? He remembers once asking Lina what kind of medicine Jack practiced. "Oh, he's a gynecological surgeon," she had said, dismissively. "Something to do with things dropping into the vagina." She gave a shudder. "I don't like to think about it."

Things dropping into the vagina. The word "things" had for some reason made Max think of tables and chairs, or, even more glamorously, pianos and chandeliers, and he has now come to see Jack as a kind of professional mover: the Allied Van Lines of the ob-gyn set.

"After all this time, Max is still skeptical about doctors," Jack now says.

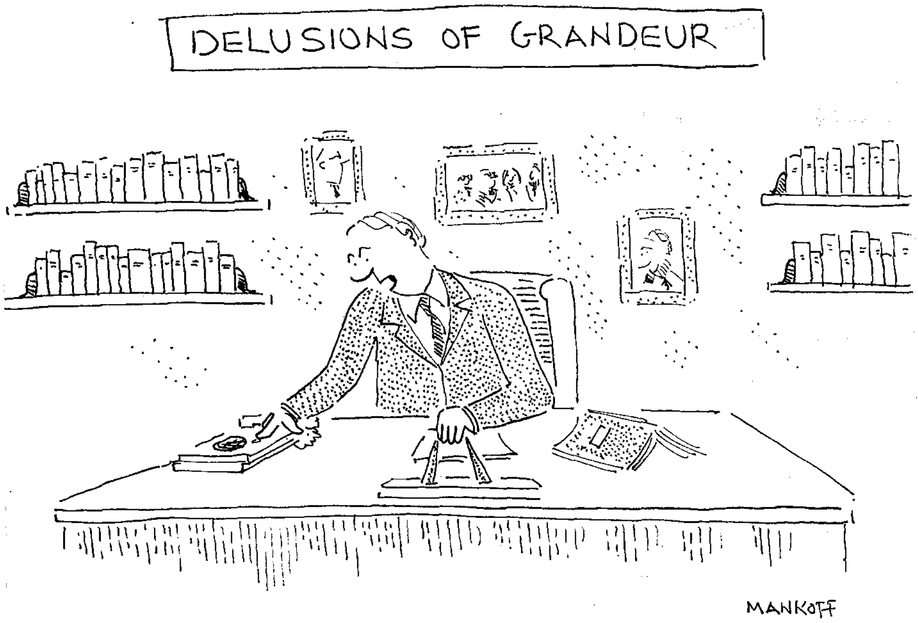
"I can see that," says Stanley.

"I once had the wrong tonsil removed," says Max.

Lina persists: "Are you finding a difference between Hiroshima and Nagasaki?"

Stanley turns and looks at her. "That's interesting, that you should ask that. You know, Hiroshima was a uranium bomb and Nagasaki a plutonium. And the fact is we're finding more damaging results from the uranium."

Lina gasps and puts down her fork. She turns and looks in an alarmed way



"Get J. D. Salinger on the horn for me!"

• •

at Stanley, studying, it seems, the condition of his face, the green-brown shrapnel of his dried acne cysts, like lentils buried in the skin.

"They used two different kinds of bombs?" she says.

"That's right," says Stanley.

"You mean, all along, right from the start, this was just an experiment? They designed it explicitly right from the beginning, as *something to study*?" Blood has rushed to her face.

Stanley grows a little defensive. He is, after all, one of the studiers. He shifts in his chair. "There are some very good books written on the subject. If you don't understand what happened regarding Japan during the Second World War, you would be well advised to read a couple of them."

"Oh, I see. Then we could have a better conversation," says Lina. She turns away from Stanley and looks at Albert.

"Children, children," murmurs Albert.

"The Second World War," says Debbie. "Now, wasn't that the war to end all wars?"

"No, that was the First World War," says Max. "By the Second World War, they weren't making any promises."

Stanley will not relent. He turns to Lina again. "I have to say, I'm surprised to see a Serbian, in a matter of foreign policy, attempting to take the moral high ground," he says.

"Stanley, I used to like you," says Lina. "Remember when you were a nice guy? I do."

"I do, too," says Max. "There was that whole smiling, handing-out-money thing he used to do."

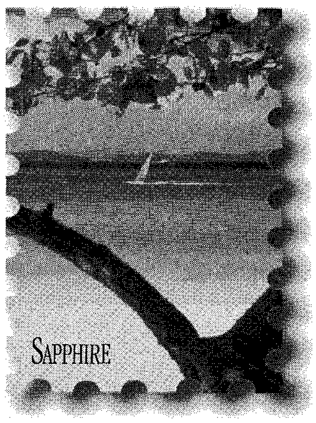
Max feels inclined to rescue Lina. This year she has been through a lot. Just last spring, the local radio station put her on a talk show and made her answer questions about Bosnia. In attempting to explain what was going on in Yugoslavia, she said, "You have to think about what it might mean for Europe to have a nationalist, Islamic state," and, "Those Fascist Croats," and, "It's all very complicated." The next day, students boycotted her classes and picketed her office with signs that read "Genocide is not 'complicated' " and "Repent, imperialist." Lina phoned Max at his office. "You're a lawyer. They're hounding me. Aren't these students breaking a law? Surely, Max, they are breaking a law."

"Not really," said Max. "And believe me, you wouldn't want to live in a country where they were."

"Can't I get a motion to strike? What is that? I like the way it sounds."

"That's used in connection with pleadings, or in court—that's not what you want."

"No, I guess not. From them I just



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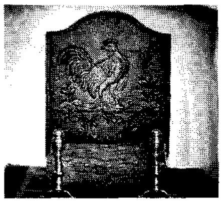

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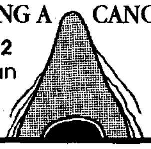

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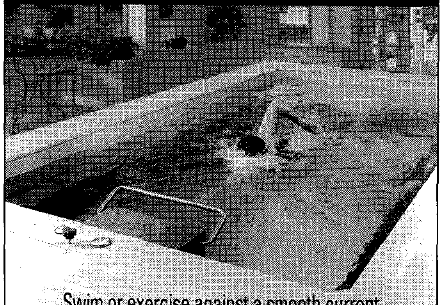

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want no more motion. Plus, I want to strike them. There's nothing you can do?"

"They have their rights."

"They understand nothing," she said.

"Are you O.K.?"

"No. I banged up the fender parking my car, I was so upset. The headlight fell out, and even though I brought it into the car place, they couldn't salvage it."

"You've gotta keep those things packed in ice, I think."

"These *cheeldren*, good God, have no conception of the world. I am well known as a pacifist and resister—I was the one last year in Belgrade buying gasoline out of Coke bottles, hiding a boy from the draft, helping to organize the protests and the radio broadcasts and the rock concerts. Not them. I was the one standing there with the crowd, clapping and chanting beneath Milosevic's window, 'Don't count on us.' " Here Lina's voice fell into a deep, Slavic sing-song. "Don't count on us. Don't count on us." She paused dramatically. "We had T-shirts and posters. That was no small thing."

" 'Don't count on us,' " said Max. "I don't mean to sound skeptical, but as a political slogan it seems, I don't know, a little—" Lame. It lacked even the pouty energy and determination of "Hell no, we won't go." Perhaps some obscenity would have helped. "Don't fucking count on us, motherfucker." That would have been better. Certainly a better T-shirt.

"It was all very successful," said Lina, indignantly.

"But how exactly do you measure success?" asked Max. "I mean, it took time but, you'll forgive me, we *stopped* the war in Vietnam—"

"Oh, you are all so obsessed with your Vietnam," said Lina.

The next time Max saw her, it was on her birthday, and she'd had three and a half whiskeys. She exclaimed loudly about the beauty of the cake, and then, taking a deep breath, she dropped her head too close to the candles and set her hair spectacularly on fire.

WHAT does time measure but itself? What can it assess but the mere deposit and registration of itself within a thing?

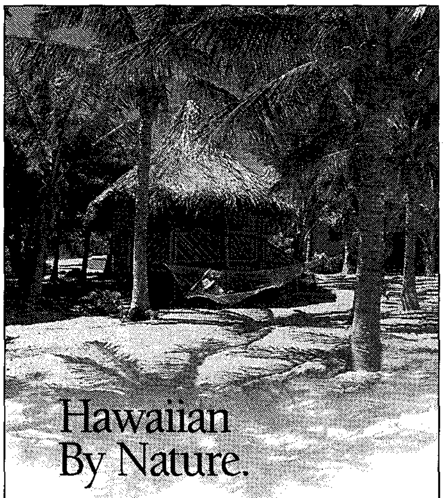
A large bowl of peas and onions is passed around the table.

They've already dispensed with the O. J. Simpson jokes—the knock-knock one and the one about the sunglasses. They've banned all the others, though Max is now asked his opinion regarding search-and-seizure. Ever since he began living in the present tense, Max sees the Constitution as a blessedly changing thing. He does not feel current behavior should necessarily be made to conform to old law. He feels, for instance, that he'd throw away a few First Amendment privileges—the ones that protect the abortion protesters, say, and the telemarketers, perhaps some pornography (though not Miss April, 1965—never!)—in exchange for gutting the Second Amendment. The Founding Fathers were revolutionaries, after all. They would be with him on this, he feels. They would be for making the whole thing up as you go along, reacting to things as they happen, like a great, wild performance piece. "There's nothing sacred about the Constitution; it's just another figmentary contract: it's a palimpsest you can write and write and write on. But whatever is there when you get pulled over are the rules for then. For now." Max believes in free speech. He believes in expensive speech. He doesn't believe in shouting "Fire!" in a crowded movie theatre, but he does believe in shouting "Fie!" and has done it twice himself—both times at "Forrest Gump." "I'm a big believer in the Rules for Now. Also, Promises for Now, Things to Do for Now, and the ever-handy This Will Do for Now."

Brigitte glares at him. "Such moral excellence," she says.

"Yes," agrees Roberta, who has been quiet all evening, probably figuring out airfare upgrades for Stanley. "How attractive."

"I'm talking theoretical," says Max. "I believe in common sense. In theory. Theoretical common sense." He feels suddenly cornered and misunderstood. He wishes he weren't constantly asked to pronounce on real-life legal matters. He has never even tried an actual case except once, when he was just out of law school. He'd had a little practice then, in the basement of an old sandstone schoolhouse in St. Paul, and the sign inside the building directory said "Maxwell D. Belmont, Attorney-at-Law: One Level Down." It always broke his heart a little, that "One Level Down." The one case he took to trial was an armed-robbery-and-concealed-weapon



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case, and he had panicked. He dressed in the exact same beiges and browns as the bailiffs—a subliminal strategy he felt would give him an edge, make him seem at least as much part of the court "family" as the prosecutor. But by the close of the afternoon his nerves were shot. He looked too desperately at the jury (who, once in the deliberation room, and in the time it took to order the pizza and wolf it down, voted unanimously to convict). He'd looked imploringly at all their little faces and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, if my client's not innocent, I'll eat my shorts."

At the end of his practice, he had taken to showing up at other people's office parties—not a good sign in life.

Now, equipped with a more advanced degree, like the other people here, Max has a field of scholarly, hypothetical expertise, plus a small working knowledge of budgets and parking and E-mail. He doesn't mind the E-mail, has more or less gotten used to it, its vaguely smutty Etch-A-Sketch, though once he found himself lost in the Internet and before he knew it had written his name across some bulletin board on which the only other name was Stud Boy.

Mostly, however, his professional life has been safe and uneventful. Although he is bothered by faculty meetings and by the word "text"—every time he hears it he feels he should just give up, go off and wear a powdered wig somewhere—it intrigues Max to belong to academe, with its international hodgepodge and asexual attire, a place where to think and speak *as if* one has lived is always preferable to the alternatives. Such a situation cuts down on regrets. And Max is cutting down. He is determined to cut down. Once he was called in by the dean of the law school and admonished for skipping so many faculty meetings. "It's costing you about a thousand dollars in raises every year," said the dean.

"Really?" replied Max. "Well, if that's all, it's worth every dime."

"EAT, eat," says Albert. He is bringing in the baked potatoes and dessert cheeses. Things are a little out of whack. *Is a dinner party a paradigm of society or a vicious pantomime of the family?* It is already ten-thirty. Brigitte has got up again to help him. They return with sour cream, chives, grappa, and cognac. Debbie looks across the table at Max

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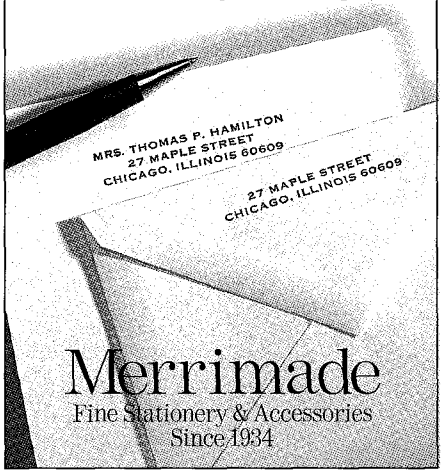

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a black light, angelic and cold
on the path to the orchard,
fox-runs and clouded lanes and the glitter of webbing,
little owls snagged in the fruit nets
out by the wire
and the sense of another life, that persists
when I go out into the yard
and the cattle stand round me, obstinate and dumb.
All afternoon, I've worked at the edge of your vision,
mending fences, marking out our bounds.
Now it is dusk, I turn back to the house
and catch you, like the pale Eurydice
of children's classics, venturing a glance
at nothing, at this washed infinity
of birchwoods and sky and the wet streets leading away
to all you forget: the otherworld, lucid and cold
with floodlights and passing trains and the noise of traffic
and nothing like the map you sometimes
study for its empty bridlepaths,
its hill-tracks and lanes and roads winding down to a coast
of narrow harbors, lit against the sea.

—John Burnside

and smiles warmly. Max smiles back. At least he thinks he does.

This taboo regarding age is to make us believe that life is long and actually improves us, that we are wiser, better, more knowledgeable later on than early. It is a myth concocted to keep the young from learning what we really are and despising and murdering us. We keep them sweet-breathed, unequipped, suggesting to them that there is something more than regret and decrepitude up ahead.

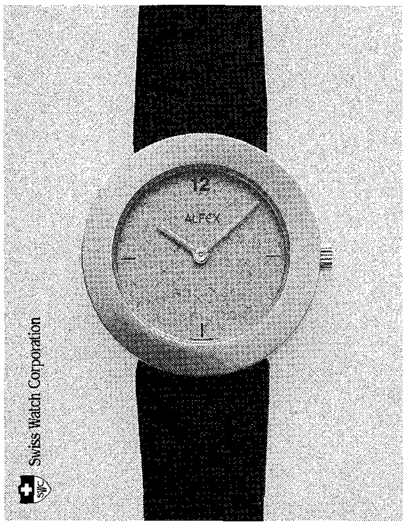
Max is still writing an essay in his head, one of theoretical common sense, though perhaps he is just drinking too much and it is not an essay at all but the simple metabolism of sugar. But this is what he knows right now, with dinner winding down and midnight looming like a death gong: Life's a quick and busy embrace, and everywhere in it people are equally lacking and well-meaning and nuts. *Why not admit history's powers to divide and destroy? Why attach ourselves to the age-old stories in the belief that they are truer than the new ones? By living in the past, you always know what comes next, and that robs you of surprises. It exhausts and warps the mind. We are lucky simply to be alive together; why get differentiating and judgmental abou who is here among us? Thank God there i anyone at all.* "I believe in the present tense," Max says now, to no one in particular. "I believe in amnesty." He stops. People are looking but not speaking. "Or is that just fancy rhetoric?"

"It's not that fancy," says Jack.

"It's fancy," Albert says, kindly, eve the host, "without being schmancy." He brings out more grappa. Everyone drinks it from the amber, green, and blue of Albert's Depression-glass glasses.

"I mean—" Max begins, but then he stops, says nothing. Chilean folk music is playing on the stereo, wistful and melancholy: *Bring me all your old lovers, so can love you, too,* a woman sings, in Spanish.

"What does that mean?" Max asks, but at this point he may not actually be speaking out loud. He cannot really tell. He sits back and listens to the song, translating the sad Spanish. Every songwriter, in his smallest song, seems to possess some monumental grief clarified and dignified by melody, Max thinks. His own sadnesses, on the other hand, slosh about in his life in a low-key way, formless and self-consuming. "Modest"



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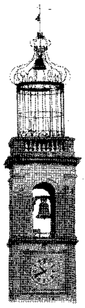

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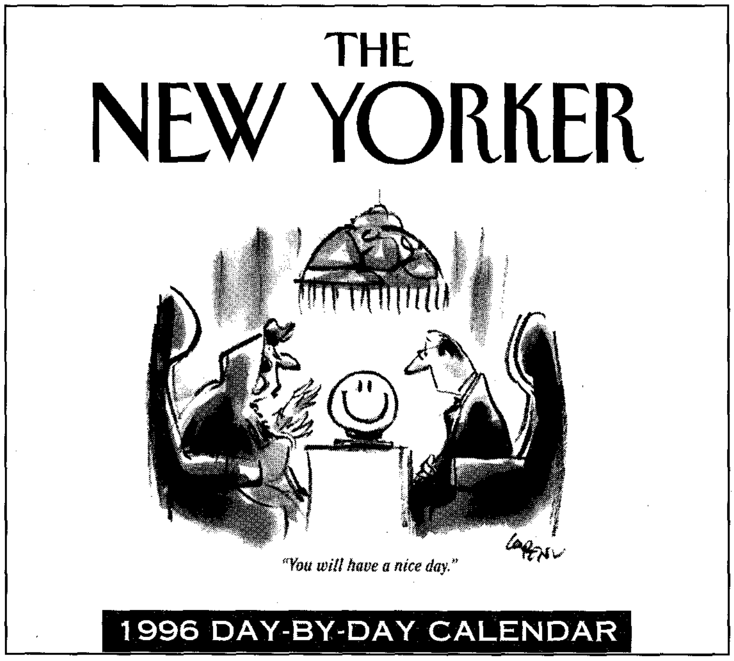
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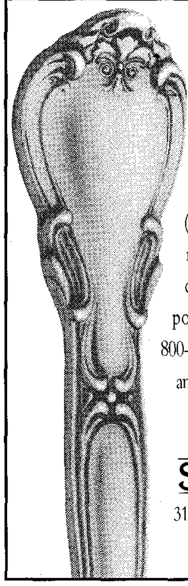

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is how he sometimes likes to see it. No one is modest anymore. Everyone exalts their disappointments. They do ceremonious battle with everything; they demand receipts and take their presents back—all the unhappy things that life awkwardly, stupidly, without thinking, without bothering even to get to know them a little or to ask around! has given them. They bring it all back for an exchange.

As has he, hasn't he?

THE young were sent to earth to amuse the old. Why not be amused?

Debbie comes over and sits next to him. "You're looking very rumpled and miffed," she says, quietly. Max only nods. What can he say? She adds, "Rumpled and miffed—doesn't that sound like a law firm?"

Max nods again. "One in a Hans Christian Andersen story," he says. "Perhaps the one the Ugly Duckling hired to sue his parents."

"Or the one that the Little Mermaid retained to stick it to the Prince," says Debbie, a bit pointedly, Max thinks, but who can tell? Her girlish voice, out of sheer terror, perhaps, has lately adorned itself with dreamy and snippy mannerisms. Probably Max has single-handedly aged her beyond her years.

Jack has stood and is heading for the foyer. Lina follows.

"Lina, you're leaving?" asks Max, with too much feeling in his voice. He sees that Debbie, casting her eyes downward, has noted it.

"Yes, we have a little tradition at home, so we can't stay for midnight." Lina shrugs a bit nonchalantly, then picks up her red wool scarf and lassoes her neck with it, a loose noose. Jack holds her coat up behind her, and she slides her arms into the satin-lined sleeves.

It's sex, Max thinks. They make love at the stroke of midnight.

"A tradition?" asks Stanley.

"Uh, yes," Lina says dismissively. "Just a little contemplation of the upcoming year is all. I hope you all have a happy rest of the New Year Eve."

Lina always leaves the apostrophe "s" out of New Year's Eve, Max notes, oddly enchanted. And why *should* New Year's Eve have an apostrophe "s"? It shouldn't. Christmas Eve doesn't. Logically—

"They have sex at the stroke of midnight," says Albert, after Lina and Jack leave.

"I knew it!" shouts Max.

"Sex at the stroke of midnight?" asks Roberta.

"I myself, of course," says Max, "usually save that for Lincoln's Birthday."

"It's a local New Year's tradition, apparently," says Albert, shrugging.

"I've lived here twenty years and I've never heard of it," says Stanley.

"Neither have I," says Roberta.

"Nor I," says Brigitte.

"Me, neither," says Max.

"Well, we'll all have to do something equally compelling," says Debbie.

Max's head spins to look at her. The bodice of her black velvet dress is snowy with napkin lint. Her face is flushed from drink. What does she mean? She means nothing at all.

"Black-eyed peas!" cries Albert. And he dashes into the kitchen and brings out an iron pot of warm, pasty, black-dotted beans and six spoons.

"Now, this is a tradition I know," says Stanley, and he takes one of the spoons and digs in.

Albert moves around the room with his pot. "You can't eat until the stroke of midnight. The peas have to be the first thing you consume in the new year, and then you'll have good luck all year long."

Brigitte takes a spoon and looks at her watch. "We've got five minutes."

"What'll we do?" asks Stanley. He is holding his spoonful of peas like a lollipop, and the peas are starting to slide.

"We'll contemplate our fruitful work and great accomplishments." Albert sighs. "Though, of course, when you think about Gandhi, or Pasteur, or someone like Martin Luther King, dead at thirty-nine, it sure makes you wonder what you've done with your life."

"We've done some things," says Max.

"Yes? Like what?" asks Albert.

"We've . . ." And here Max stops for a moment. "We've—had some good meals. We've—bought some nice shirts. We've gotten a good trade-in or two on our cars—I think I'm going to go kill myself now."

"I'll join you," says Albert. "Knives are in the drawer by the sink."

"How about the vacuum cleaner?"

"Vacuum cleaner in the back closet."

"Vacuum cleaner?" hoots Roberta. But

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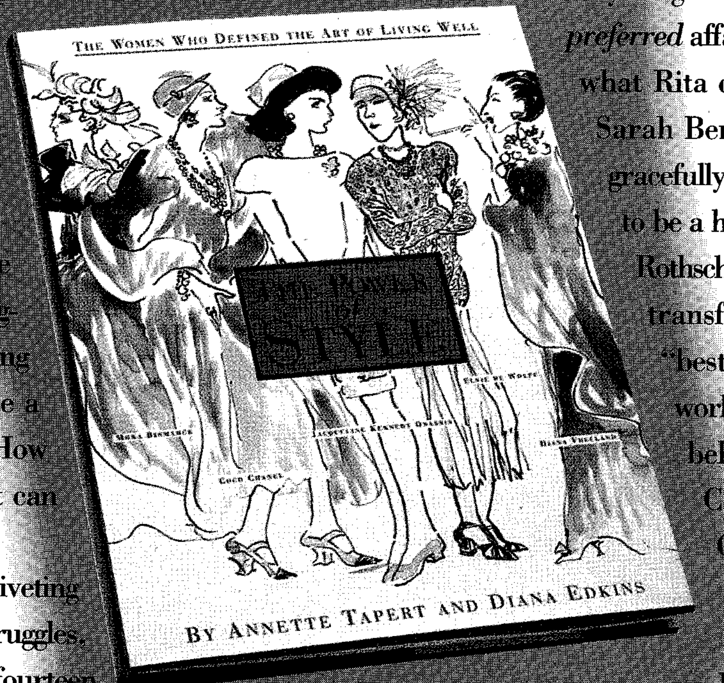
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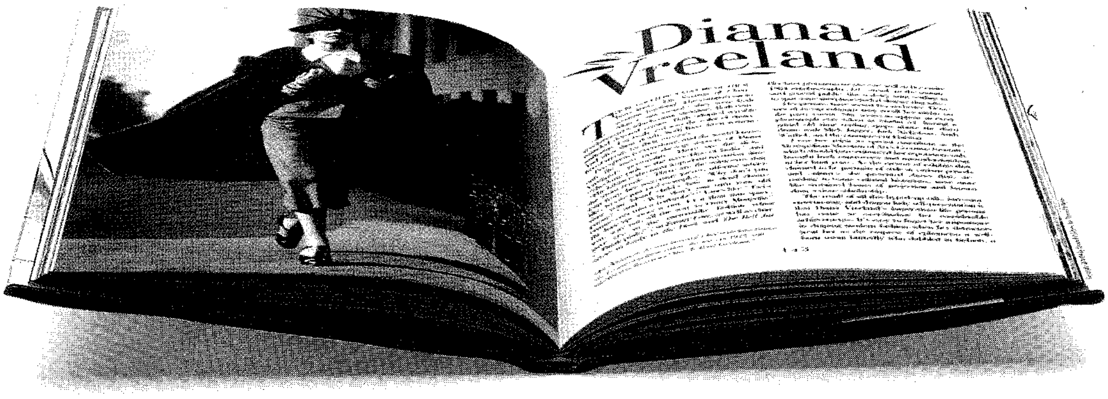
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no one explains or goes anywhere. Everyone just sits.

"Peas poised!" Stanley suddenly shouts. They all get up and stand in a horseshoe around the hearth with its new birch logs and bright but smoky fire. They lift their mounded spoons and eye the mantel clock with its ancient minute hand jerking toward midnight.

"Happy New Year," says Albert, finally, after some silence, and lifts his empty spoon in salute.

"Amen," says Stanley.

"Amen," says Roberta.

"Amen," say Debbie and Brigitte.

"Ditto," says Max, his mouth full, but indicating with his spoon.

Then they all hug quickly—"Gotcha!" says Max with each hug—and begin looking for their coats.

"YOU always seem more interested in other women than in me," Debbie says when they are back at his house after a silent ride home, Debbie driving. "Last month it was Lina. And the month before that it was—it was Lina again." She stops for a minute. "I'm sorry to be so selfish and pathetic." She begins to cry, and as she does something cracks open in her and Max sees straight through to her heart. It is a good heart. It has had nice parents and good friends, lived only during peacetime, and been kind to animals. She looks up at him. "I mean, I'm romantic and passionate. I believe if you're in love that's enough. I believe love conquers all."

Max nods sympathetically, from a great distance.

"But I don't want to get into one of these feeble, one-sided, patched-together relationships—no matter how much I care for you."

"Whatever happened to love conquers all, just four seconds ago?"

Debbie pauses. "I'm older now," she says.

"You kids. You grow up so fast."

Then there is a long silence between them, the second in this new new year. Finally Debbie says, "Don't you know that Lina's having an affair with Albert? Can't you see they're in love?"

Something in Max drops, squares off, makes a neat little knot. "No, I didn't see." He feels the sickened feeling he has sometimes felt after killing a housefly and finding blood in it.

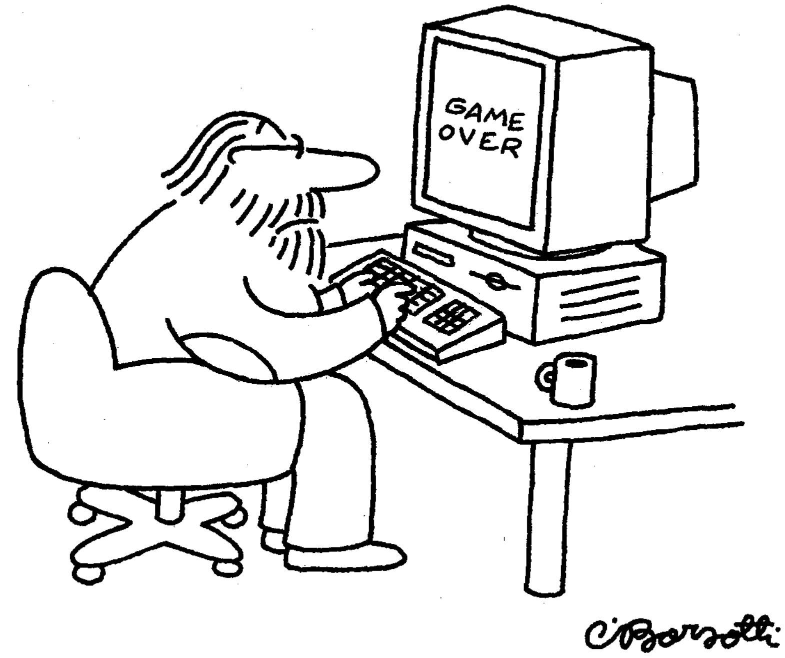
"You yourself had suggested they might be lovers."

"I did? Not seriously. Really? I did?"

"But Max, hadn't you heard? I mean, it's all over campus."

Actually, he had heard some rumors he had even said, "Hope so," and, once "May God bless their joyous union." Bu

A WRITER GETS THE NEWS



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he hadn't meant or believed any of it. Such rumors seemed ham-handed, literal, unlikely. But then wasn't reality cheesy and unreliable just like that; wasn't fate literal in exactly that way? He thinks of the severed, crossed fingers found perfectly survived in the wreckage of a local plane crash last year. Such fate was contrary and dense, like a dumb secretary, failing to understand the over-all gestalt and desire of the wish. He preferred a deeper, cleverer, even tardy fate, like that of a girl he knew once in law school who, years before, had been raped, shot, and left for dead but then had crawled ten hours out of the woods to the highway with a .22 bullet in her head and flagged a car. That's when you knew that life was making something up to you, that the narrative was apologizing. That's when you knew God had glanced up from his knitting, perhaps even risen from his freaking wicker rocker, and staggered at last to the window to look.

Debbie studies Max, worried and sympathetic. "You're just not happy in this relationship, are you?" she says.

These terms! This talk! Max is not good at this; she is better at it than he; she is probably better at everything than he: at least she has not used the word "text."

"Just don't use the word 'text,' " he warns.

Debbie is quiet. "You're just not happy with your life," she says.

"I suppose I'm not." *Don't count on us. Don't count on us, motherfucker.*

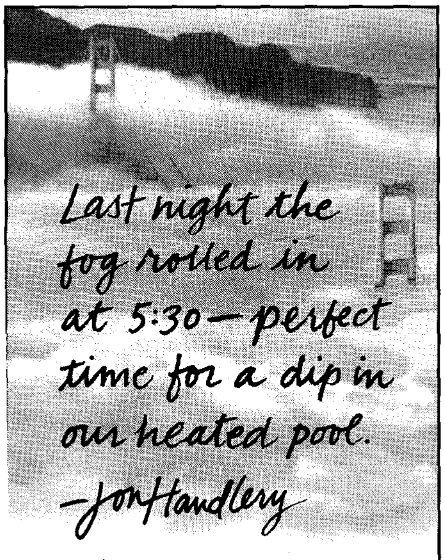
"A small bit of happiness is not so hard, you know. You could manage it. It's pretty much open-book. It's basically a take-home."

Suddenly sadness is devouring him. The black-eyed peas! Why aren't they working? Debbie's face flickers and tenses. All her eye makeup has washed away; her eyes are bare and round as light bulbs. "You were always a tough grader," she says. "Whatever happened to grading on a curve?"

"I don't know," he says. "Whatever happened to that?"

Her eyelids lower, and she falls soundlessly across his lap, her hair in a golden pinwheel about her head. He can feel the firm, watery press of her breasts against his thigh.

How can he assess his life so harshly and ungratefully when he is here with her, when she is so deeply kind and a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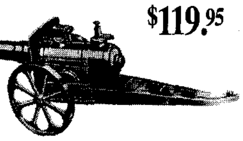

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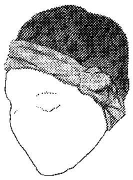

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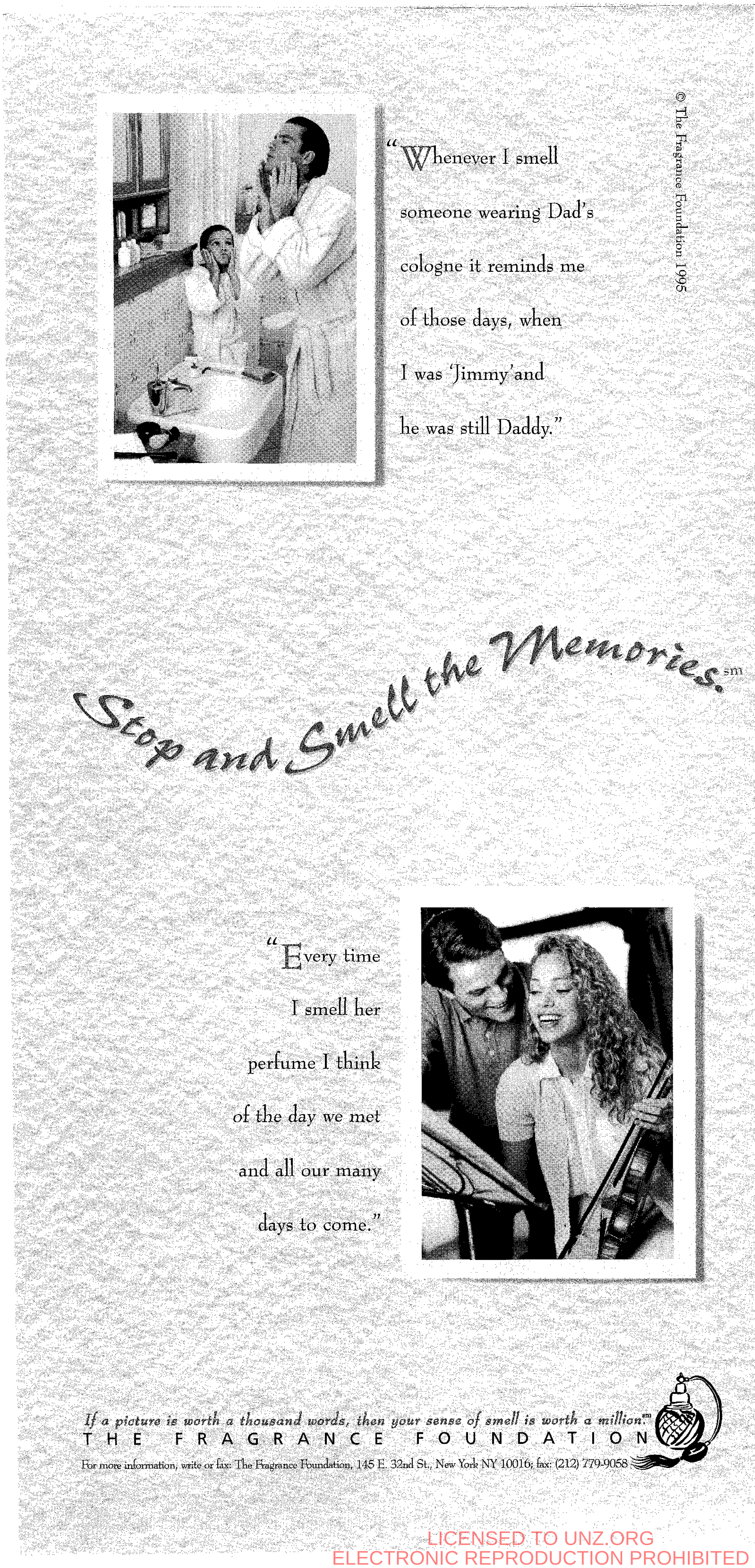
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whole new year is before them like a long, cheap buffet? How could he be so strict and mean?

"I've changed my mind," he says. "I'm happy. I'm bursting."

"You are not," she says, but she turns her face upward and smiles hopefully, like something brief and floral and in need of heat.

"I am," he insists, but looks away, t think, to think of anything else at all, t think of his ex-wife—*bring me your ol lovers, so I can love you, too*—still living in St. Paul with his daughter who in five years will be Debbie's age. He believe that he was happy once then, for a long time, for a while. "We are this far fro divorce," his wife had said bitterly at th end. And if she had spread her arm wide, she and Max might have been abl to find a way back, the blinking, intermittent wit of her like a lighthouse t him, but no: she had held her inde finger and her thumb up close to he face in a mean pinch of salt. Still, befor he left, their marriage a spluttering bu modest ruin, only two affairs and dozen sharp words between them, the would come home from the small humiliations they endured at work, separately and alone, and they'd turn then somehow into desire. At the very end they'd taken walks together in the coo wintry light that sometimes claime those last days of August—the air chil leaves already dropping in wind an scuttling along the sidewalk, the neighborhood planted with ochre mums, eve the tough weeds in bridal flower, the hydrangea blooms gone green and drun with their own juice. Who would not tr to be happy?

And just as he had then, on thos walks, he remembers now how, as a bo in Duluth, he'd once imagined a monster, a demon, chasing him home fro school. It was one particular winte Christmas was past, the snow was dir and crusted, his father was overseas, an his young sister Lily, home from th hospital's iron lung, lay dying of polio i her bed upstairs at home. His paren had always—discreetly, they probab felt, though also recklessly and mayb guiltily, too—enjoyed their daughte more than their serious older boy. Per-haps it was a surprise even to themselves. But Max, in studying their look and words, had discerned it, though i response he had never known what t

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do. How could he make himself more enjoyable? With his father away, he wrote long, boring letters with everything spelled correctly. *Dear Dad, How are you? I am fine.* But he didn't mail them. He saved them up, tied them with a string, and when his father came home he gave him the packet. His father said, "Thank you," tucked the letters in his coat, and never mentioned them again. Instead, every day for a year, his father went upstairs and wept for Lily.

Once, when she'd still been pretty and well, Max went through an entire day repeating everything Lily said, until she cried in torment and his mother slapped him hard against the eye.

Lily had been enjoyed. They enjoyed her. Who could blame them? Enjoyable girl! Enjoyable joy! But Max could not attain such a thing, either side of it, for himself. He glimpsed it all from behind some atmosphere, from across some green and scalloped sea—*Dear Dad, How are you? I am fine*—as if it were a planet that sometimes sparkled into view, or a tropical island painted in hot, picture-book shades of orange.

But deep in his private, January boyhood, he knew, there were colors that were true: the late-afternoon light was bluish and dark, the bruised tundra of the snowbanks scary and silver and cold. Stepping slowly at first, the hulking monster man, the demon man, red and giant with a single wing growing out of his back, would begin to chase Max. It chased him faster and faster, up and down every tiny hill to home, casting long shadows that would occasionally, briefly, fall upon them both like a net. While the church bells chimed their four-o'clock hymn, the monster man would fly in a loping, wonky way, lunging and leaping and skittering across the ice toward Max's heels. Max rounded a corner. The demon leaped over a bin of road salt. Max cut across a path. The demon followed. And the terror of it all—as Max flung himself onto his own front porch and into the unlocked and darkened house, slamming the door, sinking back against it, sliding down onto the doormat, safe at last among the clutter of boots and shoes but still gasping the wide, lucky gasps of his great and narrow escape—was thrilling to him in a world that had already, and with such indifferent skill, forsaken all its charms. ♦

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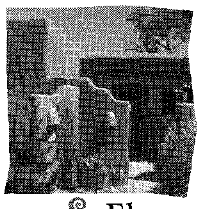

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AN EDITOR AT LARGE

DANCING IN THE DARK

A lifetime in poetry is revealed.

BY ALICE QUINN

I CAME to the work of Virginia Hamilton Adair, who is now eighty-two and blind, through the efforts of her champion and fellow-poet Robert Mezey. Earlier this year, he sent me a packet of her poems to consider for publication, and I fell in love with them immediately. Even the titles were forthright and beckoning: "Peeling an Orange," "Break-In," "Too Small for Words," and (what is now the title of her forthcoming—and first—collection) "Ants on the Melon." Her phrasing was classical in its tone, or else relaxed, in the manner of real conversation. A poem about a love affair began,

> Again the carload of children
> the sharp landing bell and the foam
> between us and the low shore.

In another,

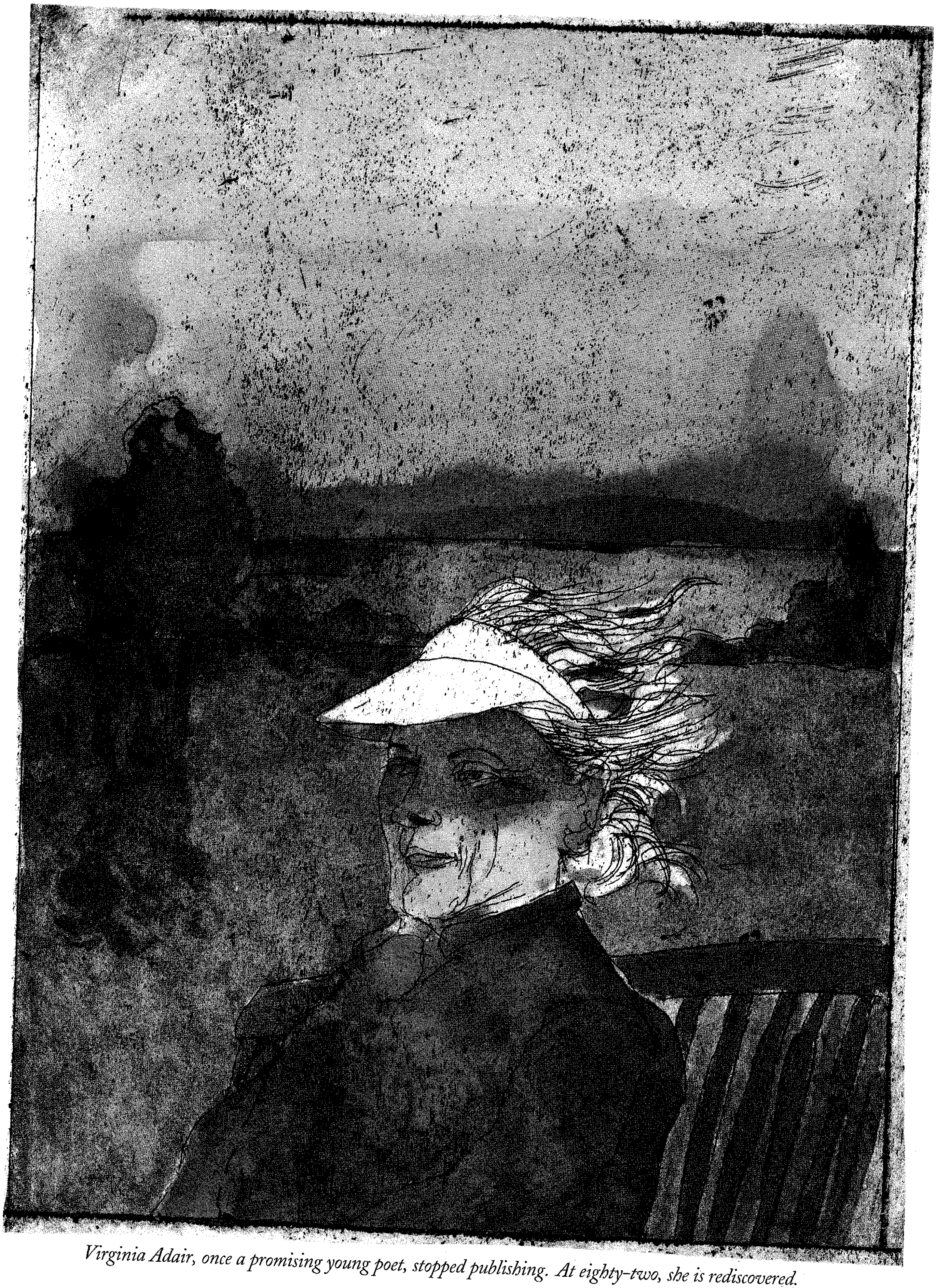
> A man told a story.
> He was a watcher of women's eyes.
> In the midnight bar he asked a stranger,
> "Why wear shades in this half-lit place?"

The rhyme was ingenious, the humor saucy and unsparing, and the author clearly took a delight in perversity, in an inversion of the expected. Her poems seemed to me poems of reckoning—of a fall from grace. It was also extraordinary to be experiencing the arrival of a new poet who was not young—whose verses evidently spanned a long life.

When I showed Adair's work to the poet Galway Kinnell, he said, "She has arrived in our world like a comet." I wrote to Mezey asking if there was more, and he told me that she had at least a couple of thousand poems. Why, I wondered, isn't she well known? It turned out that she hadn't published anything in twenty years, and prior to that only a fraction of what she'd written. "She gives different reasons for not publishing," Mezey told me. One of them was that she didn't want to worry about an audience: "What do they want, what do they expect?" And she had been forewarned about the dangers of being ambitious: she witnessed a need for recognition becoming an affliction in the life of her historian husband, Douglass Adair, Jr. She told me when we met that she had fretted, too, about her children's response: "They didn't like me for writing. It took time from them. Sometimes, I'd think, If I don't get half an hour to myself, I'm going to go crazy. I could hear Douglass sort of shooing and shushing the children: 'Now, don't disturb Ginny. She's writing.' And I knew at that moment that they hated me for wanting to write, and I even hated Douglass for shooing them." Today, Virginia—who lives in a retirement village, in Claremont, California, in a single, cozy room—can sense her children's enjoyment of her gift. She quoted her daughter, Kappa, saying to her, "Poetry is like eggplant. I dislike it, but people keep serving it to me in the most delicious forms."

Reading these poems, I sometimes had the feeling that by not publishing she was free to write about everything in her own time and in a totally honest way. Many of her best poems are the product of reflection on events that took place years and years earlier. Perhaps she was protecting her work from a premature resolution. Now that she's blind—she began to lose her sight in the mid-eighties, when she got glaucoma—this kind of percolation of a poem isn't possible. "I used to revise and revise and revise," she told me. "I'd rake over this midden and piles of trash, poems I hadn't finished or wasn't satisfied with, and I'd type things out with arrows and notes—'Move this down here,' 'Bring this up here'; they were full of interlardings. Now I can't even do that. Now what I do is full of typos that make me sound even more of a fool than I am."

Whatever the reason, Virginia stopped pursuing publication after an early and large success, taking the view that "To be acclaimed young is heady/later on a drag." And I don't think she would care about publication now if it weren't a life-



Virginia Adair, once a promising young poet, stopped publishing. At eighty-two, she is rediscovered.

PEELING AN ORANGE

Between you and a bowl of oranges I lie nude
Reading "The World's Illusion" through my tears.
You reach across me hungry for global fruit,
Your bare arm hard, furry and warm on my belly.
Your fingers pry the skin of a navel orange
Releasing tiny explosions of spicy oil.
You place peeled disks of gold in a bizarre pattern
On my white body. Rearranging, you bend and bite
The disks to release further their eager scent.
I say, "Stop, you're tickling," my eyes still on the page.
Aromas of groves arise. Through green leaves
Glow the lofty snows. Through red lips
Your white teeth close on a translucent segment.
Your face over my face eclipses "The World's Illusion."
Pulp and juice pass into my mouth from your mouth.
We laugh against each other's lips. I hold my book
Behind your head, still reading, still weeping a little.
You say, "Read on, I'm just an illusion," rolling
Over upon me soothingly, gently moving,
Smiling greenly through long lashes. And soon
I say, "Don't stop. Don't disillusion me."
Snows melt. The mountain silvers into many a stream.
The oranges are golden worlds in a dark dream.

—VIRGINIA HAMILTON ADAIR

line. Given her loss of sight, her sessions with Mezey and others are her only means of hearing her own new work and regaining access to poems she still wants to revise.

IN 1933, Virginia Hamilton was a senior at Mt. Holyoke and the winner, for the second time, of the college's Glascock Prize, awarded to the most promising poet in the Ivy League. (She still smarts from having to forgo a track meet to read her poems from a lectern.) After Mt. Holyoke, she went to graduate school at Harvard and began publishing in magazines like *The New Republic*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Saturday Review of Literature*. It was at Harvard that she met Douglass Adair, Jr., who would soon abandon law for history and, at twenty-five, co-author (with Walton Hamilton, then a professor at Yale Law School) "The Power to Govern," a book that influenced policy in the Roosevelt years. In a poem called "Two Dances," Virginia described meeting Douglass at a law-school dance: "Black hair, black suit, green eyes, a Southern accent." Who, she asked, were the men she had just danced with prior to his cutting in

> My scouts, he said, to see if your dancin
> is as good as your looks.

For Virginia, there followed a stint o teaching composition at the University o Wisconsin at Madison, where she appeared in one of the first American productions of "Murder in the Cathedral." I was a "year of marvels":

> I wear a ring with seven small diamonds
> and a couple more, a little larger.
> I am in love with at least two men, also
> the trumpet of Louis Armstrong, poetry,
> scholarship, ritual, ice-skating
> at ten below zero, drinking Manhattans,
> dancing, Wisconsin lakes and woods,
> being in love with almost everything.
> A crisis looms ahead: a June marriage;
> but ten months are too endless to be real.

In 1937, she married Douglass, and together they embarked on an academic life, moving from New Haven t Princeton and then to Williamsburg, Vi ginia, where they settled for many years—Douglass teaching history, publishing a ticles, and editing the distinguished *Wi liam and Mary Quarterly*, and Virginia ca ing for their three children and doing som teaching. She also worked in a state men tal hospital during the war, along wit

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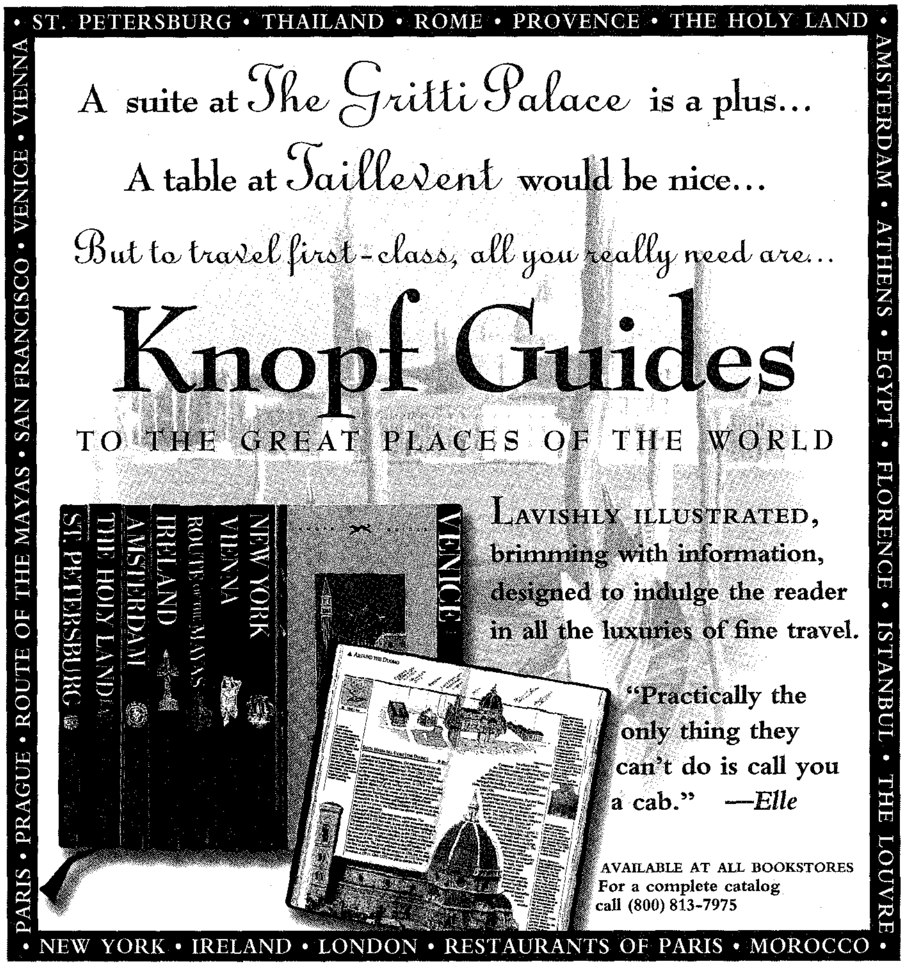
in their populous Times Square
at the subway of the ants

and saw that hemisphere
blacken and rise and dance
with ant men out of hand
wild for their melon toddies
just like our world next year
no place to step or stand
except on bodies.

—VIRGINIA HAMILTON ADAIR

group of conscientious objectors, and hough she wasn't publishing, she contin ed to write, to please herself. "I've always vritten poems," Virginia told me. "I never topped. I never know what I think until I ead it in one of my poems." And they are, n a sense, a distillation of the life she led: narriage and motherhood, trips abroad, a nove across the country to California, vhen her husband accepted a post at the laremont Graduate School, and the lourishing of her own career, in the fifties nd sixties, at California State Polytechnic. uth Harmer-Carew, a colleague, wrote to ne about Virginia at that time: "She was eally a cultural missionary. She was go- ng to bring Donne and Herbert and Blake nd ballad makers and Romantic poets, long with Dylan Thomas and Robert rost, to the darker shores of Pomona rom Claremont. She was in her mid- orties and had three grown children, but here was something very *girlish* about er—the way she walked, the way she ooked: tall, slim, very straight, nifty legs, old-red hair, blue-blue eyes, a face alive ith intelligence."

California is a big subject in Adair's vork, especially life in the Mojave Desert, vhere she and Douglass built a single- oom homestead for weekend outings: oyotes and rabbits queuing up for water id out in pans, little desert kangaroo rats with tassels on their tails like lions," a corpion discovered in a sleeping bag, and ew family rituals. "We would always ring raw oysters, and when we arrived we vould have drinks and oysters and watch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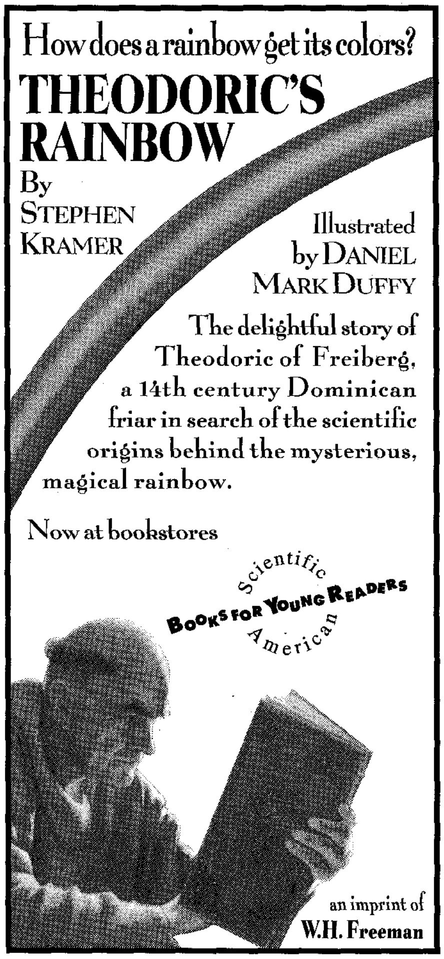
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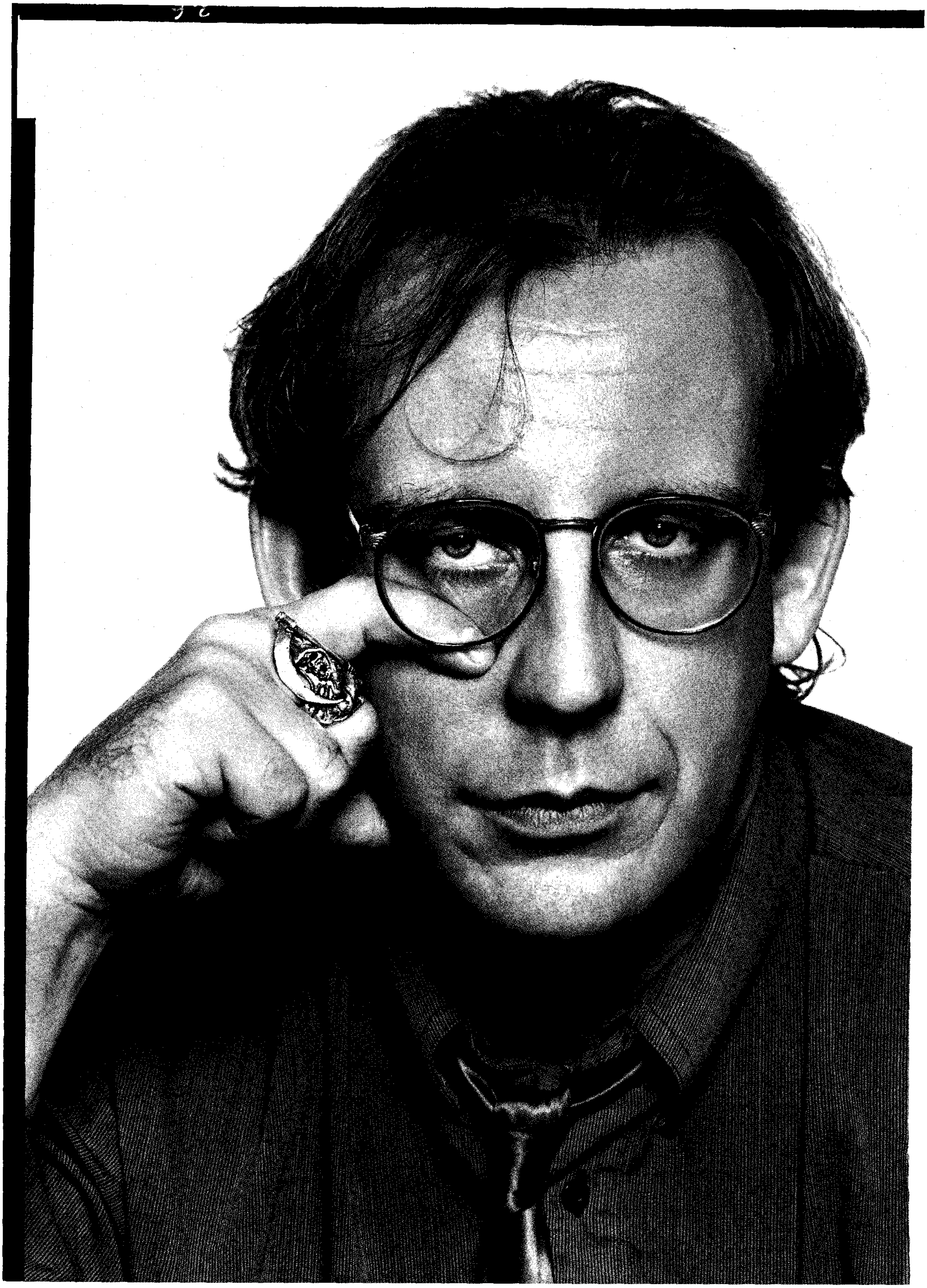
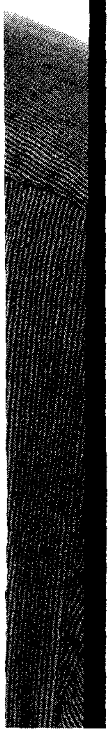




SHOWCASE
BY RICHARD AVEDON

BELL'S EPIC

ONE of this year's most substantial literary accomplishments was also perhaps the stealthiest. Before the novel "All Souls' Rising" was published this fall, its thirty-eight-year-old author, Madison Smartt Bell, was known among readers of literary fiction as a prolific but ultimately minor writer—the reliable progenitor of fitfully adventurous and sometimes self-consciously arty novels and short stories. Bell's chief distinction was his enterprise—he had published nine books by his mid-thirties—but he could not be described as a gathering force, an ambitious writer in the tradition of, say, a Mailer or a Pynchon. Who, then, was to know that during the past dozen years Bell had also been writing a historical novel about revolutionary Haiti in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and that he would produce a very big book indeed? Although Bell had never been afraid of the brutal actuality of American life—his characters have included drug dealers, domestic terrorists, and Vietnam veterans, both black and white—nothing prefigured the new novel's visionary reconstruction of the chaos and horrific violence of the island's apocalyptic racial conflict. Out of the blue, he has produced a passionately engaged opus.

Thus Bell, who grew up in rural Tennessee, and who now lives in Baltimore with his wife, the poet Elizabeth Spires, and their four-year-old daughter, has unexpectedly opened the second act of his career. "All Souls' Rising" reflects both a sustained imaginative audacity and great intellectual resourcefulness; it is startling to learn, for example, that Bell had never visited Haiti until after he completed the book. He has said that it will take two more volumes—"The War of the Knives" and "The Stone That the Builder Refused"—to complete his epic rendering of the Haitian insurrections. Now that Bell has reinvented himself as an essentially new writer, one awaits the next installment with anticipation.—HAL ESPEN

Madison Smartt Bell, New York City, November 15, 1995.

the light change on the hills," she said. "The valley was probably thirty miles wide, and there were garden plots from the size of a plate to the size of a table to the size of a room. The ones that you hear about are just fields of poppies mostly, but these were wonderfully beautiful. Some of the flowers were so tiny. They were just an inch tall. People would say, 'What do you do out there?' 'Well,' I said, 'one time we carried a melon rind out to an anthill.' I wrote 'Ants on the Melon' as an answer."

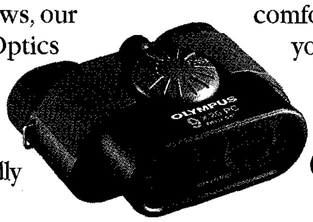
"There's a certain Wyf-of-Bath quality about Virginia," Mezey said to me, by which I think he means a free-and-easy sexuality unusual in a woman of her time. Some of her most harrowing poems are love poems written just after the suicide of her husband, who shot himself three months before their daughter's wedding, in 1968. The bewilderment Virginia experienced at this betrayal of their shared life is registered in poem after poem, along with her passion for this man reduced to "powder and chunks of ash in a shamefast urn."

"A person who can write brilliantly and teach brilliantly: the two rarely go together, I think," she said to me about Douglass. "He was trying to do both, and I think it was a contributing factor. I've met people who heard Douglass at a lecture twenty or thirty years ago, and they would say, 'Well, I only saw your husband that one afternoon, but he changed my life.' Douglass was so charismatic, he was beset by female students. I understood. But I should have let him talk it out." In her poem "Home Notes" Virginia writes about this with surpassing sympathy:

> Let me shoulder for him a part
> Of this heavy paraphernalia of grief.
> I also have packed in along that trail.

AUDEN wrote that "suffering plays a greater part than knowledge" in our acts of will. After Douglass's death, Virginia, feeling mostly defeated and hostile toward everything, stumbled into a meeting of Zen initiates. By and by, she said, "I submitted, and it was strange and wonderful. And it stayed strange and wonderful. A whole section of my beliefs and blasphemies are Zen." When I visited her, we drove up Mt. Baldy to a Zen center that she helped found. On the way, she kept harkening for the sound of the mountain stream. She wanted to see everything. "Look out loud!" she kept repeating. "Tell me the scenes." She had mentioned earlier that on the day her husband

AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.



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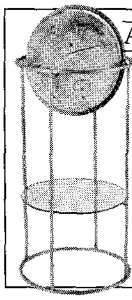

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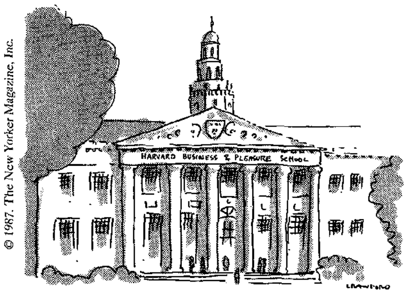

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BREAK-IN

Hearing the footsteps of thieves
in the dark downstairs:

what are you looking for?
it has already been stolen
over and over

I listen to my breath stumbling
in the dark rooms of my lungs:
what does it hope to find?
take it and welcome
while I sleep

—VIRGINIA HAMILTON ADAIR

killed himself he had skipped class and li
tened to Leonard Cohen's music all afte
noon. And then—in a weird coincidence-
I watched as Leonard Cohen himself pass
before us in the zendo and bowed to
monk before leaving the room. Virgin
was unfazed by this when she learned
it, perhaps because it was superseded
something even stranger, on our dri
back down. There was a treachero
rockslide: four-foot-wide rocks tumbl
down the mountain just ahead of us, dan
aging the car of a woman who had be
sitting on cushions with us minutes b
fore. Another thing Virginia couldn't se
and far more unsettling.

"Since this blindness thing," Virgi
told me, "I rely heavily on rhyme to t
where I am." Lately, she's been writi
couplets, which she taps out on an o
Olympia typewriter. One such:

Here in my halls of dark with silent floo
A touch is terror till I know it's yours.

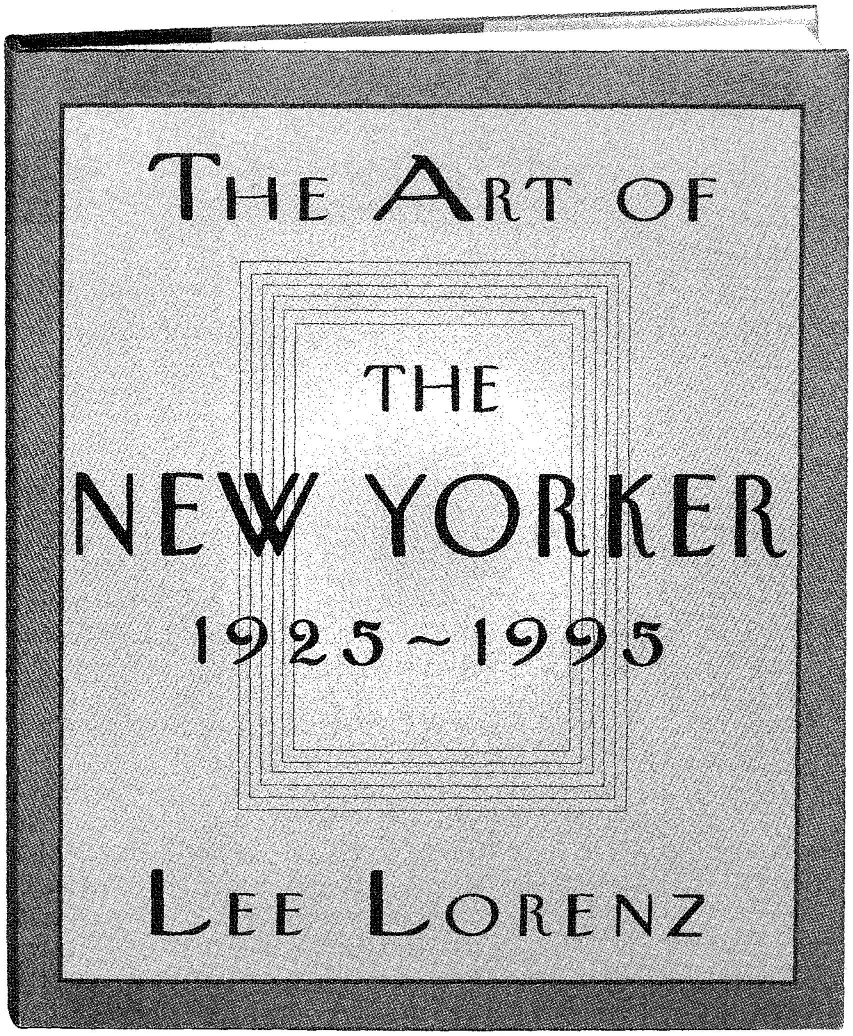
And another, almost Biblical:

"Go straight ahead" means nothing
  to the blind.
All's straight ahead that does not lie
  behind.

"Finding things is my indoor sport," s
quipped to me. But later, in a more se
ous mood, she said, "A world without o
jects. You can't imagine how tiresome it i
After a moment she added, "I had a dre
of huge, shiny shears lying in the grass.
was so wonderful."

Walking with Virginia can be an a
ious enterprise. She's ticklish and gets c
railed if people try—as they instinctiv
do—to help or guide her. I kept fumbli
in this way, and felt awkward, and said

"Why isn't it like dancing?" she replied.
used to love to dance with my eyes closed.'



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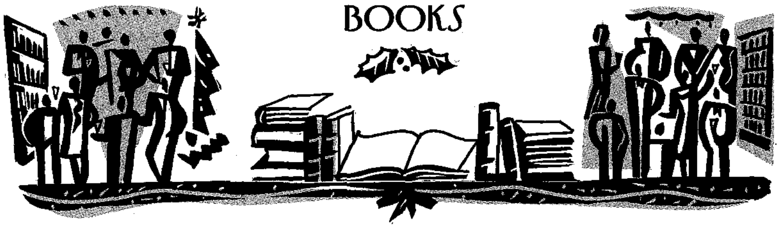

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS

A few of our contributors recall memorable books from the past year—more or less.

ROGER ANGELL: This year, as always, I read so much new fiction in manuscript that I found myself turning to old novels for relief; often, I seemed to have a Trollope close at hand. On a rereading last summer, his "Can You Forgive Her?" (which was first published in installments in 1864-65) turned out to be an exalted soap, but one that gave full rein to his deepest interests—money and station, sexual attraction, and the arrangement of society. Trollope shows us that nothing is more surprising, more thrillingly strange, than the twists and delusions of staid people about whom we believe we already know everything.

What was *Trollope's* favorite book of 1995? I propose "A Good Life" (Simon & Schuster; $27.50), the autobiography of the Washington *Post's* stripe-shirted executive editor, Ben Bradlee, which is stuffed with celebrities and frailties, and with dumb decisions (the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, etc.) perpetrated at giddily high levels. Trollope, much drawn in his books to women of wealth and brains, would have been riveted by the linkages of power and affection, attraction and respect between Bradlee and his boss, the *Post's* publisher, Katharine Graham. Bradlee himself began as a privileged but unpromising young charmer, but grew into an exemplar of the virtues of pluck and luck, bottomless energy, and a humorous, implacably attentive intelligence—a Trollopean hero, to the life.

PAUL BERMAN: "Writing Was Everything" (Harvard; $17.95)—the title of Alfred Kazin's new meditation on literature—makes you want to argue back. Everything? But everything is what he means. Kazin, as he presents himself here, has spent his life in a spiritual conundrum: dizzy with love for America and its literature, in the unembarrassed way that only someone from an immigrant home can feel; and dizzy with dismay over the loss of God And, with his heart simultaneously bursting and broken, he has had to ransack through books in search of what he loves but knows he cannot find—not small entertainments and pleasures but "everything." Never has a man turned to books with more ardor and hope! And, among the new books that I myself have read this year, his is the one I love the most.

KENNEDY FRASER: Last spring, I reread many old-time *New Yorker* writers including Maeve Brennan, the Irish-born fiction writer. I found a 1969 collection (now out of print, sadly) of her "Long-Winded Lady." These vignettes were appearing in The Talk of the Town when I was starting out at the magazine, and tell of a female promeneur's life in this city—or rather, in the few blocks around our forme offices, at 25 West Forty-third Street. I n longer envy the solitude or the precariousness of her existence, but her writing sti seems remarkable. I read "Turn, Magi Wheel," Dawn Powell's witty satire c New York literary life, which remains absurdly like what it was when the novel firs appeared, in 1936. (It has been reissue by Steerforth Press as part of an omnibus. I dived into Mary Hood's novel "Familiar Heat" (Knopf; $25) and swam blissfully along in this generous-spirited narrative, set in Florida. Now I'm readin "Shards of Memory" (Doubleday $22.95), by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, who i the limpidity of her prose and in th effortless expression of the ineffable reminds me of late Henry James.

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.: "M Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder" (Pantheon $21), Lawrence Weschler's nonfiction account of the Museum of Jurassic Technology, is a small wilderness of mirrors think Borges with bugs. Another sort c technology propels Robert K. Massie'

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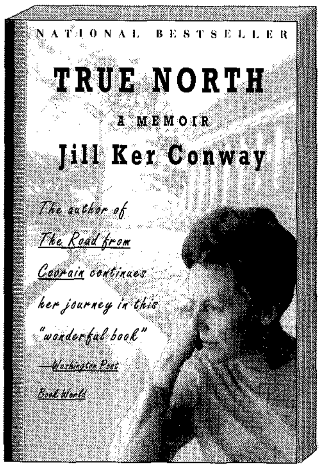
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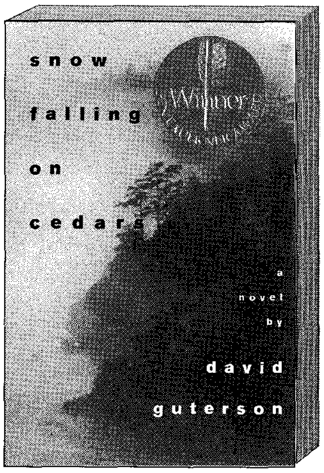
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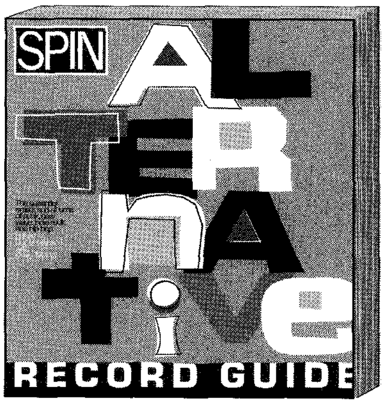
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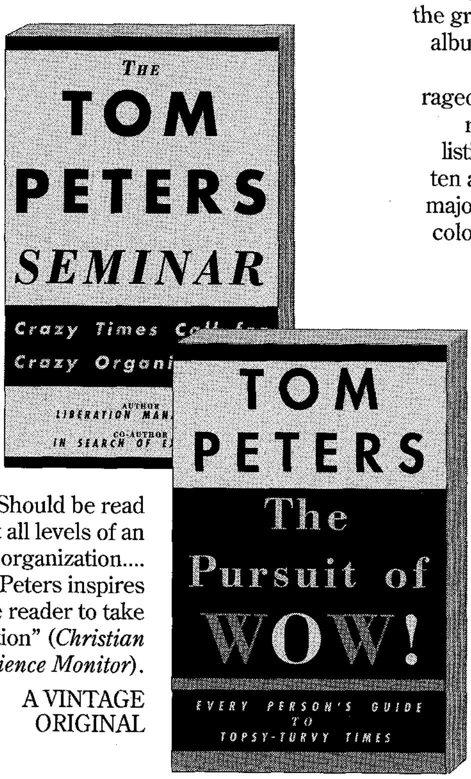
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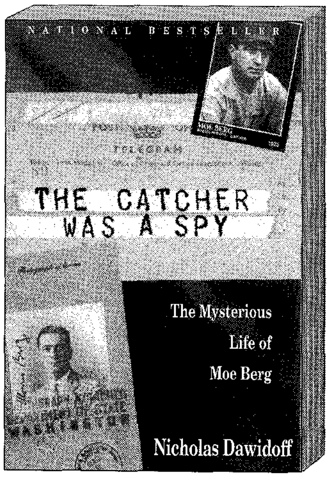
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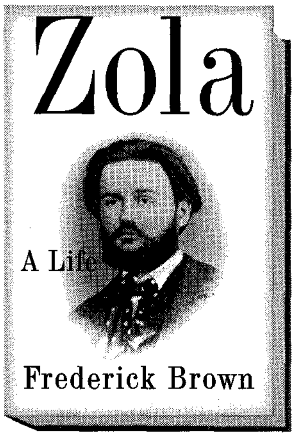

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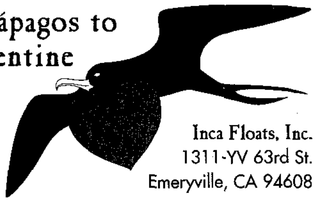

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"The Romanovs: The Final Chapter" (Random House; $25), which I read amid the whole DNA debate surrounding the O. J. Simpson case. Massie's book—a focussed tour de force—tells of the execution of the Romanovs and of an aftermath of concerted concealment, but Bolshevik bluster is no match for genetic sequencing. Two of the more striking essays in cultural criticism—Simon Schama's "Landscape and Memory" (Knopf; $40) and Ann Douglas's "Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.50)—also manage the perspectival trick of changing what you thought you knew, and doing so with a storyteller's ease of manner. And if we needed further evidence for the intimacy between storytelling and cultural criticism, "The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison" (Modern Library; $20), with a preface by Saul Bellow, bears eloquent testimony.

BRENDAN GILL: The most startling book I read this year is Roger G. Kennedy's "Hidden Cities" (Free Press; $24.95), whose contents are summed up in its subtitle: "The Discovery and Loss of Ancient North American Civilization." The first European explorers assumed that our continent was populated by a skimpy assortment of barbaric people. According to Kennedy, the population amounted to millions, and in the great valley of the Mississippi over a period of at least six thousand years there existed a series of highly refined cultures. "Charles Rennie Mackintosh," by Alan Crawford (Thames & Hudson; $14.95), is a concise and elegantly written study of the life and work of the Glasgow architect. "Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art," by Michael C. FitzGerald (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.50), describes the process by which a man of genius becomes a highly prized (and high-priced) commodity. Also this year I reread an early novel of mine, "The Day the Money Stopped," which upon publication received exceptionally favorable reviews. It isn't a satisfactory novel at all. Two conclusions: favorable reviews are even more likely to be inaccurate than unfavorable ones, and time is not on an author's side—only excellence is.

ADAM GOPNIK: By far the most brilliant book I read this year was Daniel Dennett's "Darwin's Dangerous Idea (Simon & Schuster; $30). Dennett say he believes that "Darwin's idea is a univer sal solvent, capable of cutting right to th heart of everything in sight," and then amazingly, manages to convince even th gene-wearied humanist reader that this i so. Dennett, an authentic polymath (yo can tell by how unguarded he is), come up with a high-speed anthology of the re meanings of this idea for philosophy, an thropology, language, and art, and distin guishes those meanings from all the crud and fictive ones that have attached them selves to Darwinism. Dennett's Darwin ism has nothing to do with the simple minded insistence that everything peop do depends on what their genes de mand—a folly he calls "greedy reductior ism." Instead, his Darwinism is based o the conviction that life on earth has bee an improvisation inspired by no one e cept its improvisers, and has taken on shape unknown even to them. What yc get, in short, is a jam-session view man's fate, which in Dennett's han turns out to seem no less moving than t well-scored religious ideas it has inexor bly replaced.

FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY: T Robert Fagles translation of Aeschyl "Oresteia" (Penguin; $8.95) is the mo lyrical and most powerful rendition of t trilogy I've yet read, and supplies equa remarkable notes and commentary. "T Oxford Book of Aging" (Oxford; $2 presents excerpts from the musings some two hundred and fifty writers co cerning the pains and triumphs of o (potentially) most magnificent yea Milan Kundera's "Testaments Betraye (HarperCollins; $24), translated by Lin Asher, is a luminous example of Ku dera's nonfiction, focussing on the reci rocal duties binding the artist and his her audience. Finally, Susanna Moor "In the Cut" (Knopf; $21) is the most e grossing American novel I've read year—as erudite, witty, and ferociou uninhibited as it is skillfully plotted.

JANE KRAMER: The books I like cat up with me from some other year, oft from some other century, so I'm emb rassed to say that my first choice for "b novel of 1995" is Edith Wharton's "T Reef," which went on sale when r mother was nine or ten, and which I (b ing one of those insufferable people w

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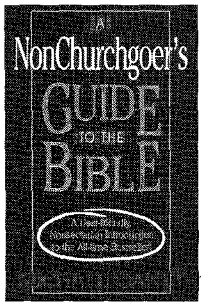
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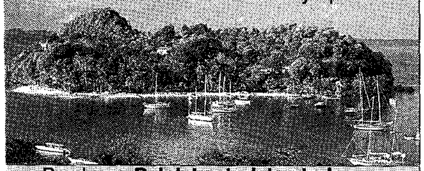

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think they read "all of Wharton" or "all of James" in graduate school, but live to learn that they haven't) knew nothing about until October. The other novel on my list is "The Meadow" (Holt; $19.95), by the poet James Galvin. "The Meadow" was my favorite piece of American prose for 1995 until yesterday, when I learned that it was published in 1992. That's how I like my books: timeless.

JANET MALCOLM: Edward Said's "Orientalism," first published in 1978, was recently reissued by Vintage ($14) with a new afterword and remains one of the sturdiest intellectual monuments of our time. It is a study of a body of writings by Western scholars, statesmen, novelists, and travellers which created the West's image of the Middle East as a place of timeless mysteriousness populated by sensual, deceitful, irrational, irremediably undemocratic people. Said's exegeses of the writers who, professing objectivity and sympathy, could not suppress their condescension and dislike or hide their political agendas compel us to examine our own carelessly stereotypical thinking about Arabs and Islam and, by extension, to ask whether any representation of another culture is necessarily compromised. "What is *another* culture?" Said writes. "Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')?"

GEORGE STEINER: It is very rare that vital new material turns up on a piece of history already endlessly examined. In "Il Bottone di Pushkin" (Adelphi; L.45.000) Serena Vitale produces a body of contemporary evidence, hitherto unnoticed, on the fatal duel in which Pushkin met his agonizing, absurd end. Her day-to-day—indeed, hour-to-hour—record of Pushkin's final year is not only an enthralling portrayal of imperial St. Petersburg in the eighteen-thirties. It qualifies the usually idealized, radiantly pathetic image of the poet. It takes two to mount a duel. Sometimes more. A book almost impossible to put down.

CALVIN TRILLIN: A review by Molly Ivins, who has perfect pitch for Texas sounds, persuaded me to read "The Liars' Club" (Viking; $22.95), by Mary Karr. It's

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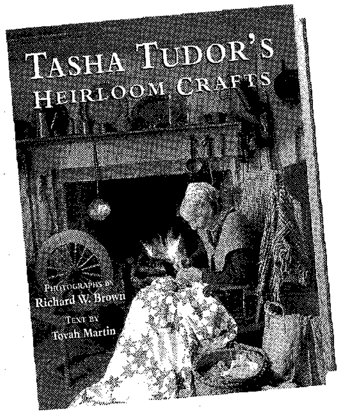

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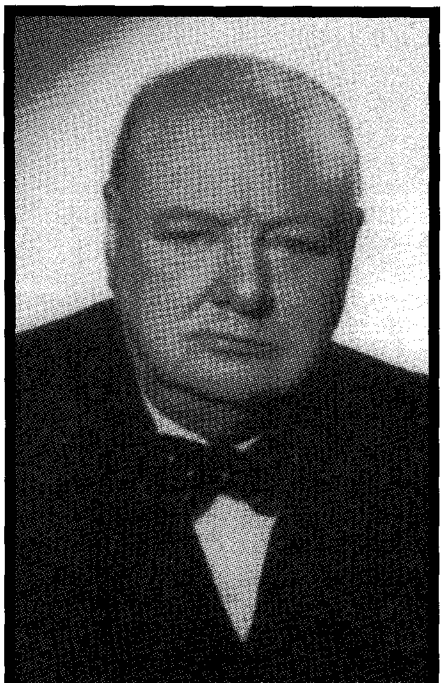

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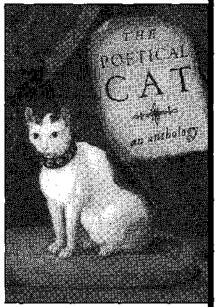

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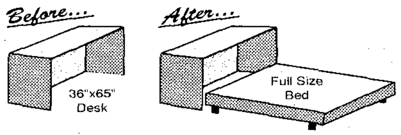

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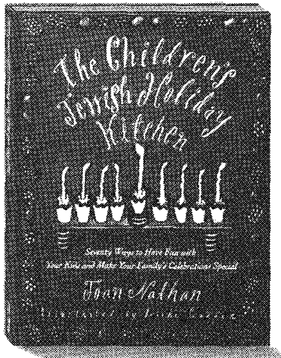
a beautifully written memoir of growing up in an East Texas refinery town. It's been months since I finished it, but there are days when I can still detect a sniff of oil in the air.

JOHN UPDIKE: How hard it is to distinguish one year from the next! In 1995, more or less, I was shaken and enlightened by two novels by American men in mid-career: "Galatea 2.2" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23), by Richard Powers, and "Henry and Clara" (Houghton Mifflin; $21.95), by Thomas Mallon. Both books packed erudition and an emotional punch; the second is the rarer commodity these days. In a calmer mood, I took in "The Europeans," by Henry James, while flying over the Atlantic. A nice thing about the transatlantic James is that there is always more of him to read; this small, early novel is dry and crisp and very clear about what the author thought the differences between Europe and America were. By way of professional research, there were "Making Movies" (Knopf; $23), by Sidney Lumet, and "Hollywood at Sunset," by Charles Higham; the latter narrates the decline of Hollywood as seen in pre-video 1972, when things looked dark.

JAMES WOLCOTT: Because I've been trying to finish my own damned novel (those interior monologues are harder than they look), I read the bare minimum of fiction in 1995. For me, the books that offered the most stimulating crackle were essay/review collections; reading them was like raiding the popcorn concession. "The Resistance" (Overlook; $26.95), by the black critic Armond White, is a visored look at movies, videos, and pop music in the eighties and nineties, in which the race card is played on every page and almost every perception is politicized. The results can be reductive, but more often there are outbursts of insight and liberating gall—as when White bares the Caucasian veneration behind the raves for "The Fabulous Baker Boys," or defoliates the hype for "Menace II Society." In the same spirit, "A Second Mencken Chrestomathy" (Knopf; $30), edited by Terry Teachout, restores H. L. Mencken to his rightful authority as spitball champion of the century. And for unadulterated truth serum it would be hard to top "Damn You, England" (Faber & Faber; $22.95), a collection of (mostly) theatre pieces by the late John Osborne. ♦

Make a Memory...



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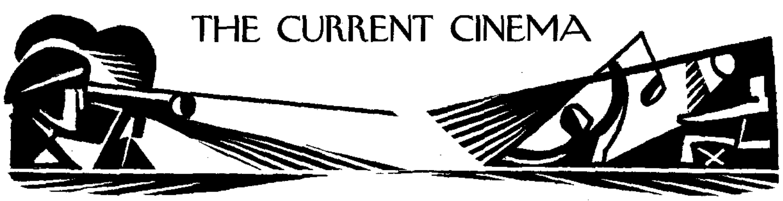


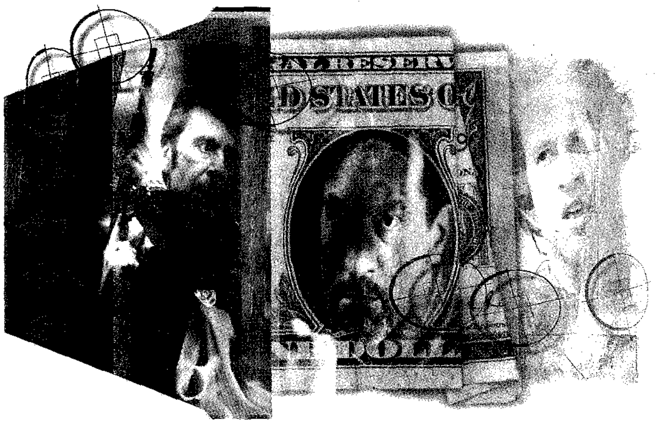
THE CURRENT CINEMA

BEASTS AND BEAUTIES

Three for the holidays: "Heat," "Sabrina," and "Jumanji."

BY ANTHONY LANE

"I DO what I do best, I take scores. You do what you do best, try to stop guys like me." And that is the ssence of Michael Mann's strange and tirring new movie, "Heat." The speaker Neil McCauley (Robert De Niro), a riminal who takes crime very seriously; e is talking to Vincent Hanna (Al icino), an L.A.P.D. detective who does e same. Vincent has just pulled Neil er on the freeway and asked him to ıve a cup of coffee. Neil is responsible r some stylish, heavy-duty robberies in e Los Angeles area, and is planning ore; so far, Vincent hasn't been able to n his man down, but he knows that the ne will come. So they sit there—cop d robber, good guy and bad guy—siz-g each other up. Because the film was itten and directed by Michael Mann, ho made "Manhunter" and "The Last the Mohicans," it goes without saying at we can't tell the two guys apart.



"Heat" seekers: Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, and Val Kilmer.

Mann is a helpless mythologist; he n't stop himself from musing on the ıbattled grandeur of his figures. That why "The Last of the Mohicans" was th a great modern movie and a true riod piece: with its conflation of the vage and the civilized, it came upon a manner of living and an intensity of speech that were adequate to Mann's high style. "Heat" is all cups of coffee, fast-food joints, and computer-alarm bypasses, but don't be fooled: it, too, gazes upon the features of its twin heroes as if they were Hector and Achilles, brass-bound in hand-to-hand destinies. This gaze is the source of the movie's narcotic attraction, and also of its absurdity. It runs for two hours and fifty-two minutes, and anyone in the audience will be able to see where it should have been cut; some of the best scenes overshoot by a couple of speeches, with the result that the tension is snapped by an unwanted laugh. But Mann isn't interested in playing safe: he must know that the movie should be leaner, yet he has decided to push his luck and see how far he can go. I only wish that he wouldn't put all his creatures through the Michael Mann endurance test, which requires them to follow his mad example. "I gotta hang on to my angst," Vincent says to his wife, Justine (Diane Venora), as if an Angst were a make of German car.

I felt sorry for Justine. Being a cop's wife is bad enough, especially if your husband has a nasty habit of skipping

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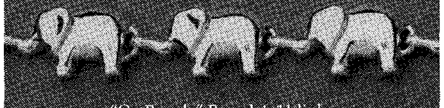

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dessert to go and check on someone with half a face. But Justine is also involved with Michael Mann—with the round-the-clock business of being a character in his production, and of conversing in the wacko California dialect of his devising. "I may be stoned on grass and Prozac, but you've been walking through our life dead, and now I have to demean myself with Ralph to get closure with you," she says. I have absolutely no idea what Justine is talking about here; Ralph is a man she slept with to spite Vincent, but she sounds more like a Derridean post-structuralist discussing Emerson. "Heat" is packed so tight with people getting closure that you can hardly move: there is Vincent's team of fellow-cops, there are the wives and girlfriends, and there is Neil's band of merry men—Chris (Val Kilmer), Cheritto (Tom Sizemore), and the supremely sleazy Nate (Jon Voight), who has the weary, floured look of a man who just got raped by a gang of pizzas. The plot is nothing more than a succession of heists, ranging from the triumphant to the interrupted. Everything else is just watching: I stake you out, you tail me, and then I chase your tail.

Some viewers, and especially those who lined up to see a thriller, will find the atmosphere constricting. Your best course is to lie back and let the movie roll over you; Mann's eye is so precise, his patterning of light and dark so immaculate, that even if you don't buy the close moral combat you might as well stay for a lesson in composition. One-story blocks at night, under the dead glow of street lamps; the unfurnished whiteness of Neil's house, with a band of blue outside where the sea begins; Neil and his girl, filmed over the broad hood of his humming car: with images such as these, Mann establishes himself as the true heir of Nicholas Ray, the last American director to forge a link between paranoia and architecture—between the spaces that we inhabit, that comfort or crowd us, and the all too well furnished rooms inside our heads. When De Niro comes home and finds a drunken, damaged Val Kilmer curled up on his floor, it's not really an actors' scene; just look at the manner in which Kilmer is framed and made vulnerable—exposed, in every sense—by Mann's camera.

Oddly, even with so much thievery around, it's Kilmer who steals the picture. Other players get the bulk of the work, and the supporting cast—espe cially Ashley Judd, as Chris's wife—i amazingly strong. De Niro produces hi best and most compressed work in a lon while; Mann penetrates a determine solitude in him that Scorsese, in the eve longer "Casino," could only scrap against. Pacino, I think, was given to much leash, and he runs himself ragge his Vincent is often a scream, but he too fond of yelps and barks and boom as though impatient to break the com posure of the movie. Kilmer, however, i something else: with his full lips, and hi fair hair pulled back in a ponytail, th guy is so laid-back that he can touch hi heels with his nose. I don't want to gi ammunition to the National Rifle Ass ciation here, but I have to confess tha if there is one scene that will stay wi me from the films of 1995, it's a s quence in which Val Kilmer, in a ne gray suit, pulls off his ski mask, stro out of the bank that he and the tea have just robbed, raises his gun to h shoulder, and calmly shoots his way o of trouble. He makes the Sundance K look like Stan Laurel. Watching hi you see all the pretentiousness and ps chotic overload of this uncomforta movie drop out of sight, and you t *yourself that "Heat" is pretty damn co*

SYDNEY POLLACK'S "Sabrina" is a r make of the 1954 Audrey Hepbu movie. The Hepburn effect is, by de nition, unrepeatable; you might as w fill an old Krug bottle with sparkli Chardonnay and spend two hours tryi to get the cork back in. It would be qu wrong to expect Julia Ormond, who n takes up the mantle of Sabrina, to rep the magic; she is an actress, after all, n an impersonator, and she has a lovelin of her own. I saw the film in a full th atre, and when Ormond rustled into t center of the screen in a long eveni dress I heard a collective sigh—one those old-style, stargazing sounds—w through the crowd. But it's a one- moment: it suspends the rhythm of t film instead of setting it. Where Aud Hepburn provided a presence, Julia C mond gives a performance, and Pollac lumpen and ungracious movie does give her room for anything more. I we along with this "Sabrina," but I w never, as Baloo says in "The Jun Book," solid gone.

The plot is, for the most part, u

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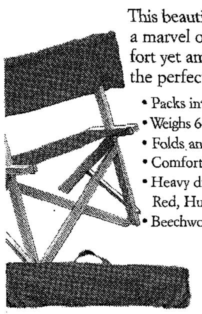

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changed. The Larrabee family lives in high style on a Long Island estate, from which the forbidding matriarch, Maude (Nancy Marchand), oversees the activities of her two sons. The elder, Linus (Harrison Ford), goes to Manhattan every day to claw a few more millions into the Larrabee portfolio; his younger brother, David (Greg Kinnear), keeps pretty busy doing nothing. The sanest man on the premises is the widowed chauffeur, Fairchild (John Wood), while the prize for the wooziest mental processes goes to his daughter, Sabrina. She has been in love with David from the cradle; in order to cure her of this delusion, her father packs her off to Paris for a year—a good opportunity for Sabrina the youngster to grow up and cut her hair, and for "Sabrina" the movie to take a nosedive into the Seine.

What is it about Paris that transforms perfectly intelligent and visually sophisticated film directors into gibbering, myopic, bus-tour geeks? I could just about stomach the Eiffel Tower fashion shoot and the funny old guy on the bicycle, but I'm afraid that once "La Vie en Rose" started flooding the soundtrack I had to stop my ears and look away. There's even an absurd photographer with a sideline in free psychological counselling. "What you have to fix, you won't fix it in bed," he tells Sabrina. Tapping her brow, he adds, "You have to fix it here." This may be the least convincing bon mot ever uttered by a Frenchman in a motion picture. Whether or not our heroine is fixed in bed I couldn't quite gather, but she arrives back in Long Island wearing shades, a great suit, and lipstick the color of a fire engine.

From here on, it's a struggle, with everyone pulling in a different direction. David falls for the new-look Sabrina, thus threatening his forthcoming marriage to Elizabeth (Lauren Holly)—a union that will, by pure chance, fatten the Larrabee wallet by a billion dollars. Maude is up in arms. Linus, as usual, is down in the mouth: Harrison Ford takes advantage of the situation to offer one of his gruffest, most wounded performances to date. He looks solid and a little surly, indifferent to love and embarrassed by the rhetoric that it seems to entail. One can hardly blame him: if you had asked Indiana Jones to murmur the line "It's as though a lovely breeze had swept through this whole house," he

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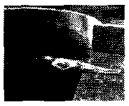

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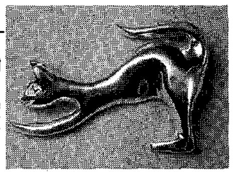

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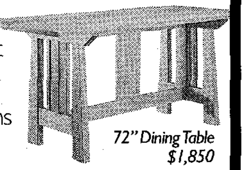

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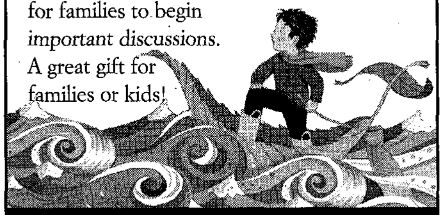

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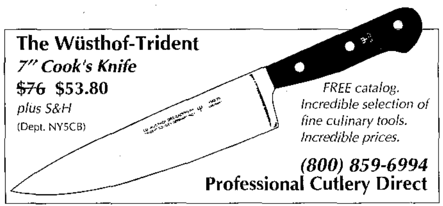

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would have cracked you with his bullwhip. Not that Linus believes in such lyrical weather reports; he just has to *pretend* to admire Sabrina—to woo her away for a while, so that David's marriage can be pushed through. And then, naturally, the pretense crumbles, and Linus begins to feel the breeze himself. These things happen in romantic comedy.

The problem is that the romance and the comedy never hit it off. In the first "Sabrina" there was, as you might expect from a Billy Wilder picture, a strain of tartness running through the passions; in Sydney Pollack's version we get a few good lines, then a patch of mush, then another good line, and so on. Linus and Sabrina go to a Moroccan restaurant, which involves eating with their hands. ("I have to try it with soup," Linus mumbles.) Then, without warning, Pollack lays into us with the montage sequence from hell: half-heard, whispery dialogue, eyes in closeup, faces veiling each other in slow dissolves, a plucky guitar pinging away in the background, and Sabrina's hands tugging fondly at rose petals as she gazes at Linus and his fistfuls of tabouli. I can't think why the maître d' didn't ask them to leave.

The climax of "Sabrina" involves a reunion in Paris, along with a series of shameless plugs for Air France. Linus and Sabrina look grounded and burned out as they face each other across a darkened street. The statutory endearments are exchanged, but you realize that the voices have never truly meshed: Ormond's light, half-bored, faintly inexpressive tones have nothing to say to the rueful, deep-bass dryness of Harrison Ford's. The two get on O.K., but he doesn't cheer her up, and she doesn't turn him on; they could be father and daughter meeting up for family gossip. And the sad thing is, I know someone in this movie who *would* be right for Linus. His secretary, Mack (Dana Ivey), is with him every day, and they look roughly the same age, and the banter nips back and forth between them like a Ping-Pong ball. Call me an old matchmaker, but I reckon Linus should marry *her.*

"JUMANJI" sounds like a new martial art, or one of those horrible ginseng drinks that make you live to the age of a hundred and thirty. But the movie is better than that. It is silly and scary in equal measures, liable to collapse under

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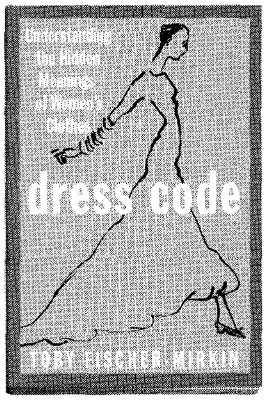

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ogical analysis, and rather more disturbing to children than was originally intended—kind of like congressional budget cuts, with added rhinos.

The action begins in 1869, when a couple of kids bury something dangerous in the New Hampshire woods. A century later, it is rediscovered by a boy named Alan Parrish (Adam Hann-Byrd), the son of a local factory owner (Jonathan Hyde). What he finds is a board game called Jumanji. He takes it home, opens it up, and invites his friend Sarah to play. One bad roll of the dice, and Alan starts to thin out: his fingers grow paper-flat and float away from him, and before he can gather his houghts or leave a note for his parents e oozes down into the game. Sarah ees, pursued by giant bats. Up come the words "Twenty-six years later." Where n earth is this movie going?

Well, it's heading for a world where mosquitoes can peck a hole in your indshield with their proboscises, moneys ride police motorbikes, man-eating owers bloom out of the fireplace, and a rofoundly pleasing stampede of African ildlife trumpets down the hallway of a ice New England home. Under the ules of Jumanji, you throw the dice and ove around the board, and, even if you on't get trapped inside the game, as lan does, all species of nastiness come ying out at you. Alan escapes only when couple of nineteen-nineties children, dy (Kirsten Dunst) and Peter (Bray Pierce), discover Jumanji and start to ay. You can tell that Alan has been livg in the wild, not just because he is earing a hat constructed from leaves ut because he is played by Robin Wilms. "Jumanji" is what the dismal Hook" was supposed to be: a colorful, sually magical arena in which Williams encouraged to demonstrate the fine art not growing up. His childishness, hich Spielberg wiped free of mania and esented as nothing more than a warm art, is now restored to its natural nzy.

The director of "Jumanji" is Joe nston, who has an easygoing talent tossing up funny, often simple ideas d keeping them in the air. I was a big n of "The Rocketeer," which buzzed th comic-strip heroics. Johnston is one those rare souls who know what to do th special effects; that is to say, his inest in new techniques is based on the understanding that we should not, under any circumstances, share that interest. We should not ask ourselves "How the hell does he make a zebra fly backward?" because the question implies a break in dramatic concentration; we should simply say "*Great* zebra" and keep staring. Watching the movie reminded me of poring over favorite books from childhood. Its animals are beautifully poised between the real and the imagined: they are muscled and snarling enough, but they also have the stylized decorum of old illustrations. When a lion slumps down on a bed and yawns, it's both a menace and a joke; Judy and Peter are frightened, but they can be confident of mastering that fear. Needless to say, they are orphans—that classic condition identified by J. M. Barrie and other fabulists as both the peak of freedom and the nadir of loss.

It is tempting to make grand claims for "Jumanji," but the film itself has the good sense to rebuff them. There is an underlying argument about fathers and sons, but Johnston stops it from welling into mawkishness: Alan is pursued and shot at by a big-game hunter from the Jumanji jungle—a role taken by the same actor, Jonathan Hyde, who played young Alan's father in the early scenes. Enough said. All the performances, in fact, are amiable and unshowy, as they are in "Sabrina"; the difference is that "Jumanji" appears to incite generosity of spirit instead of relying on it to the point of desperation. Bonnie Hunt, a nicely unstable compound of the fey and the wry, plays Sarah, who was long ago harried by bats. She has never forgiven Alan: "Everybody in this town has been calling me crazy ever since I saw you sucked into a board game." Well, they would, I guess. Sarah is still goofy after all these years, although, as the movie proceeds, her will power returns and her heart begins to melt. "Alan, you wrestled an alligator for me!" she cries as Robin Williams emerges dripping from infested waters. He explains that the blood-hungry beast in question was in fact a crocodile. "My mistake," Sarah says. It's a wonderful moment: a loud burst of courage stumbles into a quiet joke, and when the fuss has died down we see that Alan and Sarah have inched closer to falling in love. So that's what romantic comedy needs these days. No remakes, no Audrey Hepburns—just crocodiles. ♦

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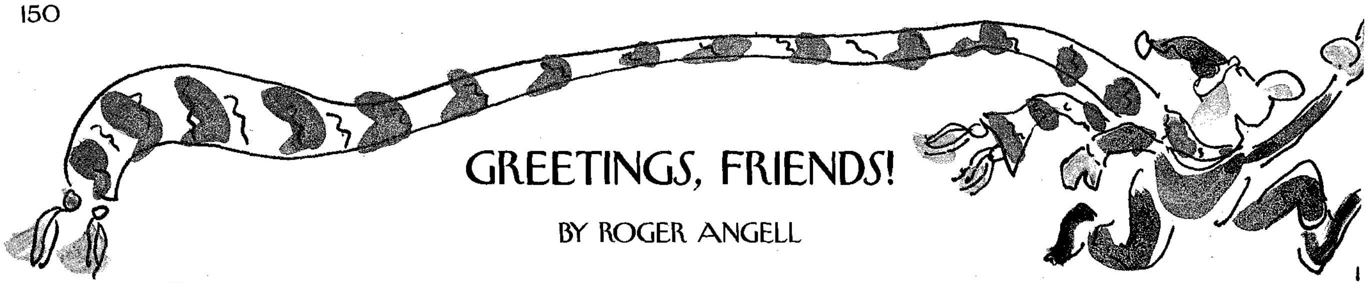
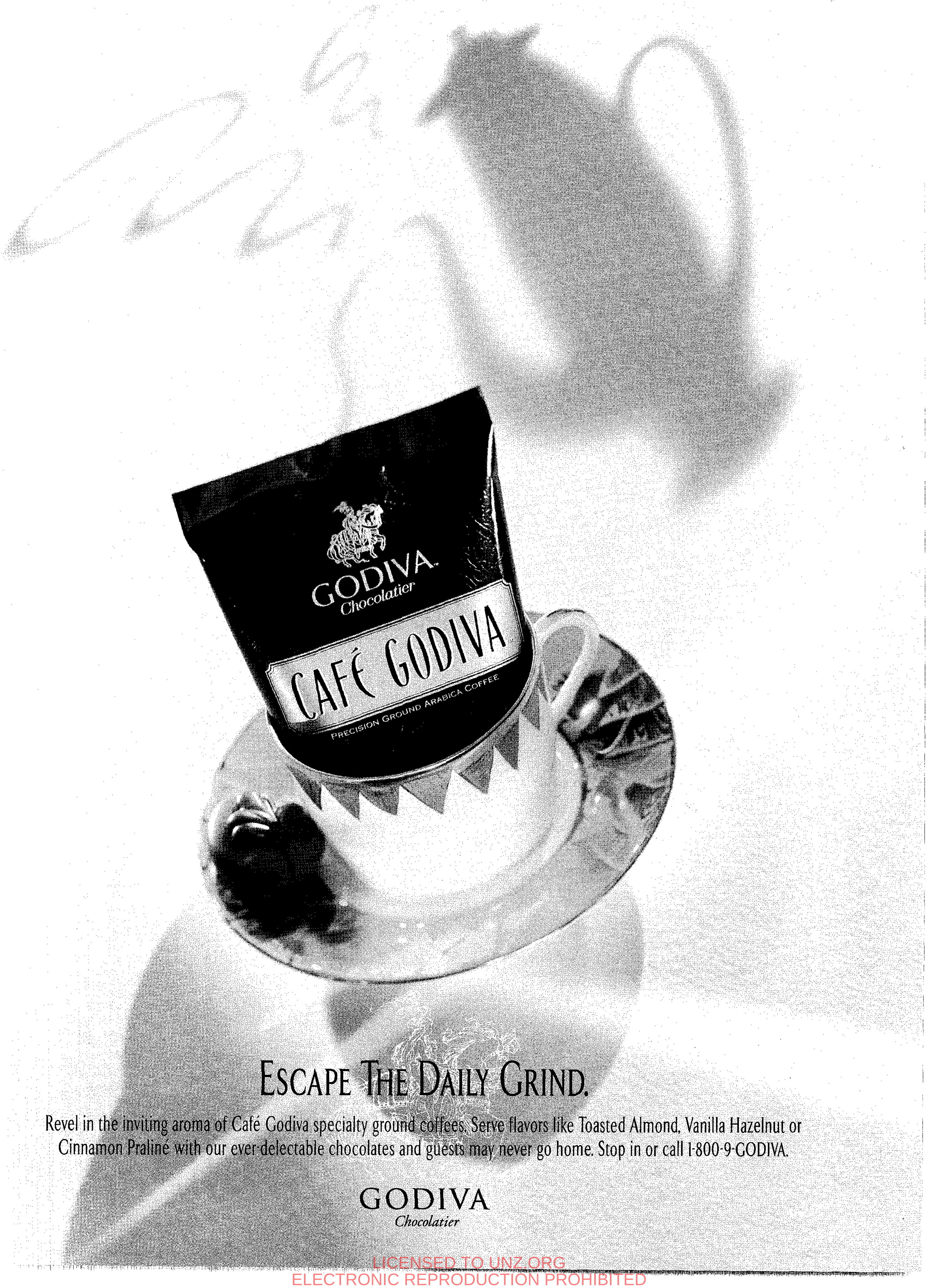


GREETINGS, FRIENDS!

BY ROGER ANGELL

Good reader, ho, it's me once more,
Your careworn super at the door,
With mop in hand and heated face:
The *work* I do around this place—
Sweep out the bygone Christmastimes,
Unkink the twisted lights and rhymes,
Dig out the trusty metaphors,
Re-Fezziwig the chimes and floors,
And make this joint look nearly new
For partyings (though déjà vu)
With friends and neighbors we wish well
On the occasion of Noël.
No tip! My pleasure! Let's begin
With hugs for Ursula K. Le Guin.
Fellow-creatures, near or far,
We hail you each, and Caleb Carr.
How neat it is to be the bearer
Of greetings for our friend Jim Lehrer;
Happy days, Hideo Nomo,
Sheryl Crow, and Andrew Cuomo.
Ah, there, Dr. Rudy Crew,
David Hare, Elisabeth Shue—
Peace, you chaps, and also pax on
Miranda Weese, Samuel L. Jackson,
Ivan Klíma, and (though sadly)
Departing Senators Nunn and Bradley.
Warm wishes from this august bureau
To Kazuo Ishiguro;
The same to you, Tegla Loroupe,
Joanna Trollope, and Quincy Troupe.
Let blessings rain, all touchy-feely,
To cheer up Hurricane McNeeley,
And laurel leaves in heaps or layers
Around Cal Ripken, prince of stayers;
And with him Tim Biakabutuka,
Young Marzoratis (Guy and Luca),
Jon Bon Jovi, Susan Lucci,
Jenny Jones, and Leo Nucci.
Descend, bright angels, in a band,
Upon Viswanathan Anand,
With Christmas music just for him
And Jane Smiley and Mary Grimm.
Tweet the flute and sound the oboe
For Dr. Ruth, Rebecca Lobo,
Joseph Volpe, Jose Mesa,
Joan Chen, and Mother Teresa,
All whilst some higher heralds—hark!—
Let drop their chords on Marcia Clark.
And carols (or enhanced CDs)
For Jeanne Calment and Morris Dees,
Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the brave Nobelist,
And Yo Yo Ma, cherubic cellist.
Come Christmas, gang, it's understood,
We rollerblade the neighborhood—
Arm-in-arming, happy campers
Bearing toys or laden hampers.
Here a wreath and there a parcel,
Now a fractured metatarsal!
Backward! Sidewise! What can match it?
Each of us a flying Cratchit
Spreading gifts and some dismay
Among our friends this special day.
Bill Gates (*Wie geht's?*), strap on your skates
And we'll go sweep up Kathy Bates,
Julie Just, Andie MacDowell,
David Bouley, and Alma Powell.
Without ado, without a care,
We'll grab the hand of Deirdre Bair
And chain along in cheerful flow
To drop a toy on Coolio,
A negligee for (yay) Fay Wray,
Some tricks from Schwarz for Ricky Jay,
Plus geese to grace the groaning board
Of Geoffrey Beene or Geoffrey Ward,
Unless, by luscious scents beguiled,
We press a call on Julia Child—
Though pausing first to just say hi
To B. B. King, R. B. Kitaj,
Isaac Mizrahi, Sharon Stone,
Fiona Shaw, and John Malone.
Home from these amusing labors,
We'll bask in asked-in Labs and neighbors
And, circled round by lights and kith,
Toss down a warming noggin with
Lauren Holly, Beverly Cleary,
Christopher Reeve, and Timothy Leary.
Then party on in larger units
Around the tree with Stanley Kunitz,
Mo Vaughn and Mira Sorvino,
Daniel Okrent, Dan Marino,
Jimmy Smits, Lois Smith Brady,
Ridley Scott, and Scott O'Grady.
To fling the old year's glooms away,
We'll bring in Penny Hardaway,
King Hussein, and Suzanne Farrell,
Cigar, Pixar, and Crate & Barrel,
Each Met and Jet, Rockette, et cet.,
And da Guarneri String Quartet!

The clock's run down, our verse is done:
A happy New Year, everyone!
Rhymees, readers (gentle allsome!)—
Pals, we pine for you and balsam
At Christmastide and through the fleeting
Hours until our next year's meeting.
Till then, old friends, what we beseech
Is peace and blessings, all and each.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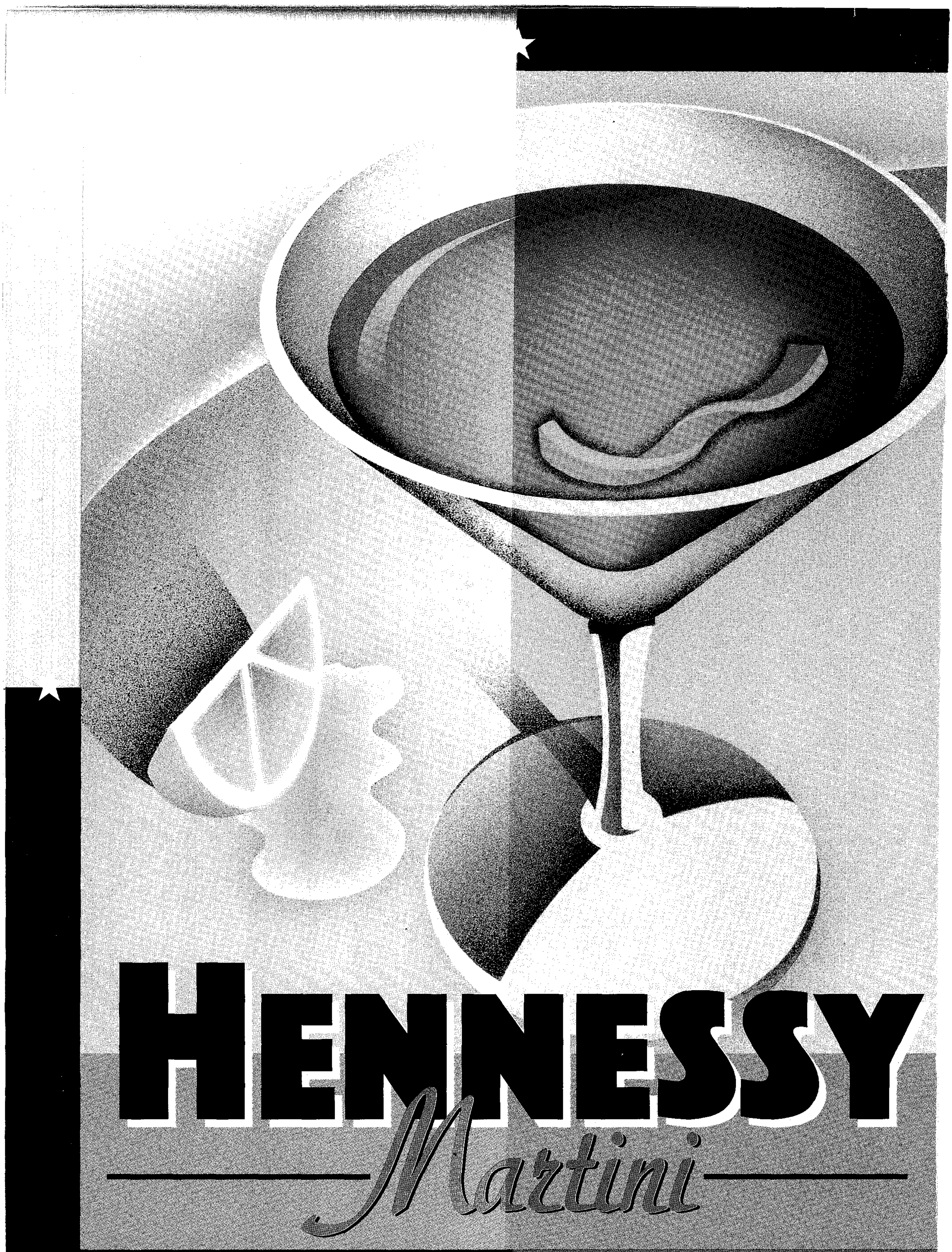
Revel in the inviting aroma of Café Godiva specialty ground coffees. Serve flavors like Toasted Almond, Vanilla Hazelnut or Cinnamon Praliné with our ever-delectable chocolates and guests may never go home. Stop in or call 1-800-9-GODIVA.

GODIVA
Chocolatier


HENNESSY
Martini

Discover this classic. Combine 2 oz. of Hennessy V.S and a squeeze of lemon over ice. Stir gently, don't shake. *Strain into a chilled martini glass. Or ask your bartender.*